

**BUILDING A SANCTUARY:**  
**Considerations for Pastor and People**

**A Professional Project**  
**Presented to**  
**the Faculty of the**  
**School of Theology at Claremont**

**In Partial Fulfillment**  
**of the Requirements for the Degree**  
**Doctor of Ministry**

**by**  
**Paula Arden Ellis-Ferris**  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **BUILDING A SANCTUARY: Considerations for Pastor and People**

**Paula Arden Ellis-Ferris**

This project addresses the pastor and church contemplating and/or embarking upon the building of a sanctuary or other worship facility. In a pastor's career he or she may be a part of a sanctuary construction. However, this does not happen frequently and a pastor seldom has the opportunity to learn from experience. This guide will cover three areas for congregations thinking about building.

First, a congregation needs to make important theological decisions. It must explore its justification for building and it must be concerned with the shape of its worship space. It needs to think through a theology of worship and liturgy, and place itself clearly in the context of its history and denomination. It is important that they are led in this process by their pastor, not their architect.

The second area of concern to pastor and people is the ongoing ministry of the church during and immediately following the building process. Congregations, and their pastors, should carefully examine the negative and positive impact a new building and its construction process could have on their current ministries.

Third, after establishing theological foundations and programming structures, congregations and pastors can benefit from the practical experience of others. This project shares the results of many interviews and conversations.

A pastor who has gained basic knowledge of theological considerations for this process can prepare for an ongoing ministry in the building church and can be prepared for the kinds of things that can happen during the building process. This project will offer the knowledge and the tools for sharing this with the faith community.

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## CHAPTER 1

### The Theological Task

"Enlarge the place of your tent  
and let the curtains of your habitations  
be stretched out  
hold not back, lengthen your cords,  
and strengthen your stakes." (Isaiah 54: 2)<sup>1</sup>

"I can't worship in here when I know we had the rummage sale in here yesterday. It seems dirty." "Sitting indoors is silly, I always feel closest to God when I'm backpacking in the wilderness." "It's important to me to have a place of beauty to worship God in; it makes me feel more meditative and prayerful." "Why can't anybody build something that looks like a church?" "The sanctuary is a holy place and it shouldn't be used for anything but worship." "Spending a lot of money on a pretty building is sinful; we only do it to build up our own egos and still the hungry are facing us each day."

There isn't a church goer or church leader who hasn't heard some of these comments, and perhaps felt them, too! In twentieth century America, few things stir up as much controversy in a Protestant congregation as the building of a sanctuary. Nearly everyone has strong feelings about a church building. Somehow the subject touches that part of us called "holy" and each person feels strongly about the shape of what is holy. A sanctuary can use a great deal of our material, emotional and spiritual resources. It can require so much human effort and ingenuity that those involved become very single minded about it. It can engage our hands as well as our hearts, involving our minds where our money is already heavily invested. A sanctuary

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<sup>1</sup>All scripture references are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

reflects to the community something of those who inhabit it, making a statement to those passing by that here is a certain kind of Christian community. Most of all, it shapes our worship in tangible and intangible ways. It can direct or restrict movement. It can discourage certain activities. It can be warm or cool, firm or soft, somber or cheerful, formal or casual or virtually any combination of these. Try to encourage intimacy in a divided chancel. Try to preach against triumphalism in an urban gothic church like New York's Saint Peter and Paul's. The shape of sacred space in American Protestantism is a subject of strong emotion, definite opinions and great variety.

Into this context comes the congregation and pastor contemplating building a worship home. What is their task? What background do they need to accomplish it? How should they approach their task? How can they ever hope to please the many clamoring voices while remaining faithful to the theological task before them? Those are the questions this project addresses with the hope of providing guidance to pastors, congregations and building committees struggling authentically with the whole scope of their task.

Few building pastors and congregations want to debate the nature and function of Christ's church at much length. However, that is precisely the task they are undertaking. For in the physical building that houses worship there is much that makes manifest that which the church believes itself to be. It is naive to believe that environment has no impact on worship, that persons and communities are not influenced by their surroundings. It is equally self-deceptive to believe that our buildings say nothing about us to even untrained observers.

From its earliest time, the worship of the faith community has been influenced by its situation: physical, social, economic. Like music, the spoken word, the plastic arts, and the dramatic arts, architecture has a language that speaks to us whether or not we wish to listen. Even when we try to turn a deaf or uninformed ear to the

buildings that house human activity, it is impossible for us not to be influenced by what they say. So, it is wise that we make an effort to listen as carefully and with as much knowledge as we can. It is important for those involved in making the design decisions about a worship place to explore as fully as they are able the interplay between the arts of architecture and worship, of culture and of theology. The congregation that wishes to build a sanctuary is involved in a theological task: that of enclosing sacred space. They are co-creators in this with the One whom they worship.

Into this task comes the pastor, with her or his personal point of view on the nature and meaning of the church as well as whatever historical and ecclesiastical background he or she may have. The job of the pastor in all of this is to translate that education, to share the process of developing a personal point of view, to encourage healthy discussion of the nature of the church and the making of worship space, all with an eye to the actual task at hand. In short, the pastor must be an intellectual. He or she is not an academic pointing the way to information, nor just a practitioner of that information; but one who bridges the gap between theory and praxis. This project is constructed to help in that task.

Where we meet matters. What we decide about the shape of where we meet matters, too, for the church comes together in a sanctuary building as a community of faith gathered to worship God. In The Worship Handbook, Thomas Langford reminds us that:

The single most important ministry of the church is worship. On Sunday mornings and other special days, more people, more expectantly, come to worship than to any other activity of the church...a good Sunday morning service, a reverent funeral, a celebrative wedding, or a joyous hymn festival can provide an occasion in which God and people become one.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Thomas Langford III, The Worship Handbook: A Practical Guide to Reform and Renewal (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1.



The arts, including architecture, when serving the context of worship have as their end to make worship a vehicle of God's grace. So, while art, in and of itself, should seek to serve its Creator, it also serves its community. In the case of worship arts, this community also serves the Creator God. Thus, housing the community of faith is art at its most theological and, potentially, its most intense.

All of our Biblical and historical heritage suggests that the community of faith has always concerned itself with the shape of this faithful gathering. The Hebrew for meeting implies "to meet by appointment."<sup>3</sup> Hence, this is the appointed place where Yahweh meets Moses and Israel. It is God's choice of meeting place and it is by God's presence that it is made holy.<sup>4</sup> The tent of meeting is a holy place where one engages with God in an awesome and powerful way. Although this takes its understanding from a culture that long held to the belief that divine power was located in a single site, the sanctuary was portable because the people's life was portable. This new God was as nomadic as the people.

Throughout the Old Testament we see the faith-filled struggle of how to put shape to the inhabitation and worship of God. The Ark of the Covenant was where God's power resided, or was it? Was Moses able to take God's power away from Mt. Horeb because God was very powerful or because God could not be located in a single place? Throughout the developing monotheism of the Old Testament we see this tension between the portableness of a God that is always with us and the power of a holy place. It is early evidence of the space-worship-culture interplay.

Strikingly, much of the power of the "tent of meeting" concept still informs our thoughts and feelings about worship. Human beings still sense a special power in certain locations. We still somehow "feel" that a particular place can be holy; can be

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<sup>3</sup>G. Henton Davies, "Tabernacle," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 498-505.

<sup>4</sup>Exodus 29:42-43, 33:7ff.

more conducive to conversation and communion with the holy than the places and paths of our daily routines. While we sense that it is God's presence that gives a set apart place its power, rather than anything particularly human, there remains in modern worshippers the need for set apartness to concentrate on God and God's presence in their lives; a place whose existence is especially created to focus the worshipper more fully on the divine mystery; a place that calls upon all we know about light, shape, color, symbol, sound and metaphor to "call up" or evoke that cloud of presence witnessed at the door of Israel's tent of meeting.

On the temple mount of Jerusalem many hopes were built. The Hebrew community that once took its shape from its nomadic lifestyle now found its identity in an ever changing historical nationality. The temple became a centerpiece for Hebrew faithfulness and assurance of God's presence and love as national strength and cohesiveness began to wane. The meaning of God's presence in the wilderness was resignified for city life. Still, humans sought for a "place" in which to capture that which was holy. The destruction of the temple was a powerful factor in the changing understanding of who God's people were called to be, for as the space changed, worship changed. So, human understanding of its relationship to the Creator took new form. The Hebrew community found its home in family dwellings and in its shared story of God's activity with God's people. Where once the family journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, now the family table and its Seder meal and rituals became the center of Passover.

Without either the Jewish temple or the Greek temples in which to worship, the New Testament community found its bond in Christ-history rather than national history. Like the Hebrew community, the place of worship became lodged in a story rather than a building. In the case of the early Christians this story was the gospel one. For a while, secrecy marked the dark places of Christian worship and domesticity and intimacy marked its nature. The first churches were ordinary houses

of the more patrician members of the Christian community. The Roman house was well suited to gatherings, furniture was mobile, as was the congregation, since little permanent could be erected in the midst of persecution. "This kind of building, with its multiple rooms and spacious atrium [was] well suited to the various classes of persons of which the Christian meetings were composed, namely, the catechumens, the faithful, and the penitents."<sup>5</sup> This, says Dix, resulted in a particular kind of theological development in the early church.

Because the early church was able to dispense with the erection of any sort of special building effort for the first century and a half, they focused instead on the nature of what they were doing together. Their environment, the "house churches" about which we hear so much in the New Testament and in the second century, fostered a sort of intimacy and simplicity of worship. Conducted in a home, by a physically limited number of persons, the worship, primarily the Eucharist, took on a sort of domestic character, something shared by a family among only its members. It was not unlike the Passover Seder after the temple destruction, where family ritual took on significance that was previously held by temple ritual.

This reinforced the corporate nature of the activities and left little room for privatistic devotions which could be conducted elsewhere. In his landmark survey of the origins of Christian liturgy Dix asserts:

We regard christian worship in general, not excluding the Eucharist, as essentially a public activity...the apostolic and primitive church, on the contrary, regarded all christian worship, and especially the Eucharist, as a highly private activity, and rigidly excluded all strangers.<sup>6</sup>

This kind of intimacy and corporateness of activity was largely lost by the fourth century and not recovered or revalued until the Reformation with its emphasis on the

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<sup>5</sup>Louis Duchesne, Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution, trans. M.L. McClure (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910), 399.

<sup>6</sup>Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (New York: Seabury, 1945), 16.

personal aspect of religious activity. However, while the Reformation re-emphasized the importance of the individual, the importance of personal salvation, personal study, and personal religiosity, this personalness emphasized the intimacy between God and the believer, not necessarily between believer and believer. The sense of corporate intimacy was not fully reclaimed by the Reformers.

It is well to keep in mind that much of the American religious experiment sought/seeks to recapture this sense of personalness and individuality. Methodist congregations in particular, grew rapidly in the colonies and new United States. The small class meetings were built on intimate connections and required the support and accountability of members. It gained wide acceptance in America. The personal nature of the societies reinforced the primacy of individuals and individuality so popular with Americans. It is worth noting, however, that the notion of corporateness as part of this domestic intimacy was not incorporated in the emphasis on individuality and personalness of religion. In Methodism, the personalness and individuality of religion focused around God as present to the individual and the overriding importance of a personal and unique salvation event. But, as the dominance of the class meeting began to wane with it went the sense of accountability fostered in the classes. The feeling that one is responsible to and for other members of the community declined in popular sentiment.

For those struggling with how to build an appropriate space for twentieth century Protestantism, it is significant to realize the extent to which the domesticity and intimacy of the space contributed to the corporateness of the theology and, possibly, to the tenacity of the faithful. This is in marked contrast to the individuality and personal privacy we now associate with intimate surroundings. A space can derive its intimacy by isolating small groups or individuals in a kind of coziness, or it can promote intimacy by encouraging knowledge of one another and meaningful interaction and movement.

It is this latter sort of intimacy that is valuable. It encourages faith development and relationship with God and Jesus Christ. It promotes the corporateness which is essential to our claim of a collective history and our identity as a church that is the body of Christ. Theological concepts are important to the form of the gathered church and they are important considerations for the team designing contemporary worship space.

Beginning in the fourth century, sometime following the conversion of Constantine, we begin to see evidence of substantial change in worship space and theology. "The domesticity of such locations in private homes gave a sense of hospitality and intimacy that was lost when Christian worship went public."<sup>7</sup> While Duchesne asserts that the place for worship had gained particular importance from an early date, he and Dix agree with White that it is at about this time that removal from the house-church to the Roman basilica occasioned much change in theological thinking:

It was this originally domestic spirit of christian worship as much as anything else that preserved the clear understanding of its corporate nature. The understanding of this began to fade at once when it was transformed into a "public" worship in the great basilicas of the fourth century.<sup>8</sup>

Two general forms of worship space emerge in this time. First, there are house churches given over and converted to permanent places of christian worship. The most famous example of this is at Dura-Europos, which, while it retains the size and scope of a domestic dwelling, does not shun beauty or decoration. There appears to be "no ideal of squalor...about the Pre-Nicene celebration of the Eucharist."<sup>9</sup> Dura-Europos is painted from floor to ceiling with religious images and stories. Further,

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<sup>7</sup>James F. White, Introduction to Christian Worship (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 85.

<sup>8</sup>Dix, 18.

<sup>9</sup>Dix, 141.

Dix recites several examples of gold, silver and precious accoutrements of early basilican and house churches. Thus, the desire to bring art to bear on the sacred space continued to expand as the scope and size of Christianity expands.

The other basic form took its shape from the Roman law courts which Christians first acquired for their now legal worship and which they emulated when they began to build specifically for the purpose of christian worship. Thanks in no small part to Constantine, who financed nine churches out of his privy purse, the worship in these magnificent new buildings took on more and more of the sumptuousness of the imperial court. "The emperor's architects simply adapted a well-developed building type, the basilica, or Roman law court."<sup>10</sup> This placed the bishop at the judge's throne and began a new shape and movement in the liturgy. While the congregation was still mobile, moving to where they could see and hear best, the clergy began to become somewhat more removed and isolated, both by their physical removal and elevation as well as by their unspoken association with the Roman law officials.

Here we see the weight of culture's part in the relationship of art-theology-culture (i.e. architecture-worship-culture). A kind of familial worship did continue among the monastic orders. For some time they maintained the domesticity of corporate Christianity. In most cases, this provided the kind of communal life not generally shared by the church outside its walls. But some monastic orders, as well as other church authorities, grew in stature and power until they rivaled the monarchies, bringing yet another dimension to the art-theology-culture interplay.

Enormous change came about as the culture of the West came out of the early Middle Ages. This was reflected in ecclesiological and liturgical arts. At this point, the monasteries which had harbored and protected learning throughout the time, burst

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<sup>10</sup>White, 86.

forth and became the architectural pacesetters for the multitude of churches that were erected by the growing monarchical system. In this change we see further evidence of the interplay between worship space and theology. Worship spaces became longer and longer, due in part to technological prowess, but also due to the increasing specialization of the priests and the removal of the Eucharist from the people. As the altar table retreated further and further from the congregational space, the divided chancel and nave now served to virtually obscure the Mass from the masses, leaving them to private devotions in the nave, while the clergy tended to the Eucharist in the chancel. These private devotions took many forms, among them worship of the very Eucharist to which they had limited access. A further medieval development was that of "attributing symbolic meanings to every bit of space, furnishing, and the actions of worship, a fanciful development that often betrayed the loss of comprehension of items once functional and obvious in purpose."<sup>11</sup>

Abbot Suger, building the abbey church at Saint Denis along Cluniac lines, speaks for his age when he asserts:

Let every man think as he may. Personally I declare that what appears most just to me is this: everything that is most precious should be used above all to celebrate Holy Mass....Those who criticize us object that a saintly soul, a pure spirit, and faithful intentions should suffice to celebrate Mass, and indeed we agree, that is truly more important than all else. But, at the same time, we maintain that...inwardly all should be pure and outwardly all should be noble.<sup>12</sup>

The royal financiers and the religious shapers had a common goal. In a time when the Western church was triumphing hand in hand with growing monarchical rule, the kings and religious orders joined to express triumphalism in the church's edifices and accoutrements. In the late middle ages and Renaissance, when a space for a royal stronghold was secured, the building of the place of worship preceded and

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<sup>11</sup>White, 90.

<sup>12</sup>Georges Duby, The Age of Cathedrals: Art and Society, 980-1420 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 94.

superceded the building of the logis de roi. The prevailing theology saw Christ's birth, Passion and Resurrection as ultimate triumph, and linked it directly to the military victories of the King. Christ was represented as the sovereign king. Thus, it was fitting to build awesome monuments to this triumph.

Into this victorious mood come the building "masters." Linked to the royal and religious rulers for whom they worked, each of the buildings that took form under their hands "was a demonstration of Catholic theology, a transcription into inert matter of the professors' philosophy...[and] more than ever Catholic theology at this time was a statement about light."<sup>13</sup> This architectural cosmology is almost tangible when one enters a place such as Saint Denis, Chartres or even the ruins of Cluny.

The church must be a sumptuous and magnificent sanctuary in order to compensate as much as possible for the extreme vulgarity and poverty of the place where the Eternal Word chose to be born.<sup>14</sup>

So Anne of Austria instructed her architect in 1635. She reflects the centuries of thought preceding her in which ever higher and greater expressions were found for religious architecture. Whatever one may think of her specious theology, it is certain that many modern Christians, when they think of a powerfully "religious" space, think of the great gothic monuments. For surely, in Christian history there can be no greater time of monumental building than that of the age of cathedrals. There, human art and effort understood itself to be in service to God and the worshipping community, seeking to express in the physical what could only be guessed at, sought after and lived in a spiritual realm. These builders, content to work at projects that would outlive them, sought to align the structure of the worship space with the harmonies of the universe.

It was a time when virtually all artistic endeavor was engaged in a theological

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<sup>13</sup>Duby, 95.

<sup>14</sup>Roger G. Kennedy, American Churches (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 16.



understanding of its task. In his summary work, The Age of Cathedrals, Georges Duby suggests that such art was essentially liturgical art. "Whatever secular works it may have given rise to were minor and ephemeral; nothing remains of them."<sup>15</sup> Secular art was rare, as were the artists who saw themselves working from what we would now call a secular context. The fundamental assumption of art was that its purpose and fulfillment must be divine. Working with shape and light architects attempted to define the nature of the Holy, the place of humanity and the import of the worshipping community as they enclosed sacred space for worship. "The art of the cathedrals culminated in the celebration of a God incarnate and attempted to depict the peaceful oneness of the Creator and [God's] creatures."<sup>16</sup>

While we no longer regularly build cathedrals of such magnitude and scope, there is still much that is authentic for us in them. The overarching concept of striving to "place" the worshipping community in the creation is still an admirable effort. The sensitivity to light as a means to evoke the holy and to shape space cannot be overlooked. But, most of all, the sense of the space being in service to God and the community should be uppermost in our thinking even today. And, though our resources may be more limited and our task expressed less cosmically, we must still offer our best art in the service of the One who gives it; both the art of architecture and the art of the worship it houses. What is not authentic for us any longer is the intimate tie between the church and the monarchy, or the church and the state. Neither church nor state serve one another directly, rather each contributes to the unique complexion of America and its religions.

The separation of church and state produced an American context for sanctuary building effort that is a mixed one. All our cathedrals are denominational rather than national. While the American horizon has its cathedrals, older and newer,

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<sup>15</sup>Duby, 98.

<sup>16</sup>Duby, 147.

a different sympathy is in play in the American context. Because American churches have long thought themselves the new Israel in the new Jerusalem, trueness and purity have played an important part in shaping the American church.

Though Chapter 2 will address this more fully, we note here that the American dream of a new Israel does impact the way we build our buildings. American Methodism, deriving its heritage from the English reformation, yet gaining strength and importance in the nineteenth century, has had its mixture of "chapel" or "meeting-house" mentality in its buildings as well as more grandiose statements of gothic and byzantine revival urban sanctuaries. A building congregation will recognize these two forces of radical reformed severity and grandiose celebration of status in tension both in our heritage and in the thinking of our gathered people today. Somewhere between "adequate" and "excessive" there is room for the sacramental and liturgical in the art of building a sanctuary.

Although they do not often articulate it as such, building committees and their congregations are engaged in art. And they are engaged in theological art. They are determining the shape of liturgy and worship for the gathering of the faithful for years to come. They have an obligation to recognize that they are participating with God to enclose sacred space. This is not just an endeavor in making an aesthetically pleasing surrounding for worship, though it is that. It is the holy task of making a place a sacrament. It is the shaping of a space that enables a single worshipper to be embraced by the presence of God and to remember the corporate nature of that relationship and enables a gathering of the faithful to truly meet one another and Christ.

Thus, a worship space is more than that which houses our worship in an aesthetically pleasing way. It must be art in service to the mystery of the worshipping community of faith. That is, it summons, through artistic medium, the understanding of what happens when the faithful gather to celebrate Eucharist

with/give thanks to/meet/commune with God. When one enters a place of worship, whether or not community worship is being conducted, the sense of holiness must be "felt." A worship place should not evoke its architect, a particular pastor, nor even an especially forceful donor. It must take its shape from and give shape to the worshipping community. These two functions can be held in tension and can find expression through the metaphor of art.

Each United Methodist congregation will need to understand its own cultural and historical setting, clarifying the need for straightforward function, intimacy, corporateness, transcendence, and divine presence in its worship space. Thus, a church embarking upon the building of a sanctuary sees itself engaged in a theological task as well as an artistic one. And the pastor serving such a congregation must summon all his or her learning to the task of journeying in such an endeavor.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Historical Perspective

"In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you." (Exodus 20: 24b)

To situate American Methodism into the dynamic interplay of worship, worship space and cultural impact on that space is an exercise in variety, to say the least. In some senses, American Methodism and its architecture follow the general trend of Protestantism in the American colonies and the independent United States, and is largely treated as such in works on American church buildings. This is particularly so in the eastern states where Methodism gained stability and prestige before its sister congregations in the west. In the western part of the United States the frontier mentality held on nearly a hundred years longer than in the urban east. Thus, at any given time in the first 150 years of Methodism in colonial America and the United States a wide variety of buildings housed the Methodist societies and the congregations that grew up around the initial establishments.

These initial establishments of Methodist societies in the colonies were an extension of the societies in England, still under the direction of John Wesley himself, and the colonial founders followed the trend of religious establishmentarianism that prevailed in the new colonies; that is, they sought legal establishment. It was "widely assumed throughout the nations of the West that the Christian church should be officially established with legal and financial support from the government of each nation."<sup>1</sup> It was, as Handy suggests, nearly impossible to conceive that the nation was founded for any other purpose than that the glory of God could come as a result of church and government working hand in hand. Like other protestants in the colonies,

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<sup>1</sup>Robert T Handy, A Christian America: Protestant Hope and Historical Realities (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), 3.

those of the Methodist societies were largely heirs of British Christianity which saw itself as receivers of the promise of the new Israel. Thus, this sense of special mission became:

a fundamental motif in American life, and was to be expressed in many ways, religious and secular, through the years...because the missions to the Indians were finally not very successful for a number reasons...accompanying the sense of mission was the feeling of moral superiority that also was to become a characteristic of American life.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly this universality of religious sentiment, not yet influenced by Enlightenment thought, helped to shape the style of worship used by churches and, consequently, the spaces created to house that worship. The structure of this worship was largely hierarchical, conforming to the general understanding of society's framework. Thus, Protestant worship spaces still retained the long, narrow room, usually with the divided chancel that predominated in Catholic Europe and for the most part Protestant England. This was basically a small scale version of the Gothic cathedral or the great basilicas.

Of course, on a smaller scale this arrangement was not quite so daunting as the great spaces of England and the continent, but there is little indication in the structures that remain to us that these worship spaces encouraged warmth or familiarity. The spaces continued the trend of separating the clergy and worship leaders from the people. Perhaps more importantly, it kept the altar at the furthest possible distance from the people and physically separated it from them by the barrier of the communion rail and, usually, steps.

This socio-religious framework of establishmentarianism was not as universally accepted, however, as the majority opinion holders might have wished. Dissenting religious groups, those who did not see hope in the promise of establishmentarianism, existed in the colonies from the beginning. While they were

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<sup>2</sup>Handy, 7.

still small they were harshly treated, something of a contradiction in a land established under the banner of religious freedom. But, as the groups grew larger and more varied, the authorities could no longer enforce their vision of religious uniformity and the growing number of dissenters gained a measure of toleration.

What effect this had on Methodist societies is impossible to measure. However, they surely must have been feeling the tides of these changes. Initially, their identity carried over from England. They were members of the Church of England and as such were among the majority in the southern colonies and a reasonably strong force in the northern ones. However, they also saw themselves as "special." For, while they continued to worship, be baptized and communicate in the Anglican church, they also met in ever growing societies. Around the time of the American Revolution the Methodist movement made several significant changes in worship and its space that reflect both their growth and their new identity increasingly separate from that of the English Methodist movement.

As early as 1766, records indicate that the Embury class in New York grew until "it began to crowd the long, narrow room, and thoughts were turned to building a meeting house."<sup>3</sup> Throughout the third quarter of the century it became increasingly obvious that the movement could not rely indefinitely on the hospitality of private homes and church buildings became necessary. This growing sentiment for building separate meeting facilities indicates the widening gap between the Church of England and the Methodist movement in America. While some surely continued to worship in the Anglican churches, especially in the southern colonies and states, it was inevitable that with the construction of a "Methodist" meeting house the importance of worshipping at the Anglican Mass must have faded somewhat. And for those in the north, where Anglican churches were not as common, the Methodist

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<sup>3</sup>Emory Stevens Bucke, ed., The History of American Methodism, 3 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 1: 77.

meeting house doubtless took on a kind of significance that the English places of meeting may not have. One would expect individual members of "societies" to increasingly identify with their Methodist building. Thus, more and more "meeting houses" became necessary. This trend would eventually result in the building of full-fledged "churches."

The shape of worship played a counterpoint melody to the shape of the Methodist societies. There was increasing divergence from the service John Wesley wished to establish both in England and in the United States. In his succinct summary of Methodist history Norwood reminds us that "few efforts were made to use [John Wesley's] Sunday Service with all its liturgical forms," and it soon disappeared on this side of the Atlantic. He continues:

This fact has more than liturgical significance. It is symbolic of the loss of the central concept of the church at the very moment the American societies were becoming a church. The net result was to leave the church without a stated form of worship.<sup>4</sup>

So, while the societies were becoming more and more independent from the Church of England, they were also acquiring an independence from Anglican influence on their worship.

Although Norwood suggests that the loss of common liturgy was a loss of a central concept of church, it may also represent a reshaping of the concept of the "church" influenced by the "societies" and the emerging American government. Methodists now required a Sunday Service, indicating that they no longer attended Anglican worship with any regularity. In addition, they do not appear to have had much desire for uniformity of worship from congregation to congregation. Norwood confirms this trend and notes its influence on worship when he comments that:

at a very early date, long before the organization of the church, a clear distinction was made between the public and the private meetings of the

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<sup>4</sup>Frederick A. Norwood, The Story of American Methodism (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974 ), 229.

societies...the sermon quickly became the center of most services, the other parts becoming adjuncts of the proclaimed message.<sup>5</sup>

These first buildings, intended to house the newly independent congregations now worshipping as such, rather than meeting as societies, were relatively modest, in part because the needs of the emerging church/society movement were simple and small. The meeting place for worship could not be called a church or hardly even a chapel. They were referred to as "preaching houses" or "meeting houses" indicating that the spoken message was predominant and that functionality was the hallmark.

A proper place of worship for Methodist (except sacramental occasions) would be a plain, well-aired structure suitable for preaching. But almost anything would do under necessity, including the run-down old foundry which became the headquarters of Methodism in London.<sup>6</sup>

This is a good clue to the usual meeting places for sermon-centered worship. But, what of the "sacramental occasions" Norwood sets apart and discusses later. Some, certainly, must have continued to receive the sacraments at their Anglican parish, as the Wesleys intended from the start. Others may have curtailed their communing at the Lord's Table in favor of the increasingly popular "love feasts" celebrated at quarterly and annual Conferences. Many may have considered the baptisms and occasional communions at revival meetings adequate. At any rate, no special consideration for space seems to have been provided for these functions in the "meeting houses." In addition, Methodist societies continued to meet in private homes for class meetings.

Conover sums up the building styles of the early church as being consistent throughout the colonies. He suggests that in the beginning the churches were generally "mere meeting houses."<sup>7</sup> Naturally, one supposes that this is because the infant congregations had little money or skill for the building endeavors of the Old

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<sup>5</sup>Norwood, 229.

<sup>6</sup>Norwood, 35.

<sup>7</sup>Elbert M. Conover, Building the House of God (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1928 ), 53.



World. In Methodism there was at least one additional factor, that is that Methodist societies were not yet full-fledged churches and would not complete their transformation until sometime after American independence. They remained communicants of the Church of England and had little need for anything beyond meeting houses. In fact, their need even for this comes later than other groups, because the church/societies met in homes for quite sometime.

Eventually the Methodists did have their own church, following the Christmas Conference of 1784. This Conference established stated ritual and orders. While these official statements almost certainly had widespread influence, they did not evoke dogmatic adherence or the kind of uniformity that prevailed in other denominations. It is difficult to say when most members began to participate in Methodist sacraments, marriages and funerals. However, it seems fair to say that the spirit of individualism had at least as much influence as the official rituals for Eucharist, Baptism, marriages and other rituals.

The emergence of Enlightenment trends began a major shift of thought in the Methodist societies and churches which, up until this point had retained the character of a movement, "a church which kept on being a society."<sup>6</sup> The influence of Enlightenment thought served to significantly undermine the cross denominational commitment to religious establishmentarianism. By the time the Constitution was framed there was no longer a strong effort to create a national religious establishment. This did not, however, reduce the impact and importance of religious life and structure on society. Handy asserts:

Protestant leaders from many denominations [still] operated on the assumption that American civilization would remain a Christian one, and that its Christian (which for them always meant Protestant) character would become even more pronounced....Churches had been disestablished and separated from the state, but the idea of a Christian society certainly

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<sup>6</sup>Norwood, 119.

had not disappeared.<sup>9</sup>

Christianization of civilization continued to be the leading theme of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the heaviest debate being whether civilization must precede Christianization or vice versa. During this time the Methodist church was becoming increasingly stable in the eastern and urban parts of the United States and began to emphasize religious concern for society's ills. At this point Methodism begins to acquire some of its outward trappings of churchliness. On the other hand, the West continued to be a frontier right through the middle of the nineteenth century.

Throughout these developments the formal church structure offered little guidance about what the churches should or should not be. Most administrative oversight had more to do with the practical matters of appointing circuit riding clergy and overseeing deeds of property than with matters spiritual. Very little interest was expressed in official opinions about liturgy for baptism, for the Lord's Supper, etc. Methodists used all sorts of varieties of baptism and established their well-deserved reputation more from their enthusiastic singing than from theology or rubrics.

During this time little is directed by the General Conference about the nature of church buildings. Drawings of the period indicate that the majority of Methodist buildings around the turn of the nineteenth century were still of the meeting house variety, ranging from solid and not unattractive brick houses in the cities to the most basic of timber structures in the frontiers. One assumes that this was in part because of the less than wealthy state of the church. But, it may also have been attributable in part to the intimacy of the nature of worship and the needs of Methodist worship.

The business of building did not go on without any direction. About this time (circa 1808 General Conference) we see that specific provision is made for deeds to

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<sup>9</sup>Handy, 27.

church property that are drawn up in such a way as to permit the duly appointed minister to preach and carry on pastoral functions freely in the appointment.<sup>10</sup> So, while the administrators were not yet making statements or creating specific guidelines about the nature of worship space, they were expanding their theology of ordination and orders of ministry to include guidelines about property control. This church control of property, rather a congregational ownership of it remains with the United Methodist church today and reinforces a sense of communal ownership of worship space.

During the course of the nineteenth century Methodism changed substantially, with the changes moving from east to west as the country became more stable and urban across the western part of its expanse. While the forces of enlightenment thought continued to have strong influence, Handy reminds us that it was not universal in its effect. "Some denominations employed revivalist patterns much more fully than others, and in turn were much more deeply influenced in theology and practice by them--Methodists and Baptists especially" [emphasis added].<sup>11</sup> This set Methodists apart somewhat from their "reasonable" and enlightened neighbors who were beginning to establish academic roots for their theology. Methodists remained experiential, most especially on the frontier. They were also very influential.

While some denominations were becoming more institutionalized, Methodism became strong in the revivalist sweep across the nation. Large numbers of persons were drawn to the unstructured enthusiasm of Methodist meetings. This may have been the dominant influence in a highly rural America, where many people did not have an opportunity to be exposed to the erudite developments of urban theology. So, while eastern churches began to think of building formal worship spaces, the western church continued to have a functional attitude about its meeting places.

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<sup>10</sup>Burke, 1: 453.

<sup>11</sup>Handy, 26.

It was during this time, Handy suggests, that the goal of a Christian civilization took on a new shape. It was to be Christian, of that Protestant leaders were assured, but now the thought was that it was to come about through persuasion rather than national establishment. However, most of them seem to have been largely unaware of how much specifically Protestant content they had in fact invested in their understanding of state and society.<sup>12</sup> Naturally, this goal took different turns in different denominations. Even within Methodism there was a split of the most serious kind over the issue of slavery.

All this had its impact on the building efforts of Methodist churches. As the churches became increasingly established and a greater force in individual communities, their buildings took on a less functional aspect and began to acquire a more aesthetic demeanor. When looking through photographs and contemporary line drawings of churches of the period, the most familiar church buildings belong to the Congregational churches in the northeast and, often, the Methodists in the southeast. The northeastern Congregational churches look particularly "churchy." Over and over they repeat variations on the pattern of white clapboard, spire at the front center, long, narrow room with a divided chancel.

Conover also suggests some broad generalizations about church buildings. He states that "in the South the churches frequently conformed to English tradition [chapel style],...in New England the meeting house type prevailed."<sup>13</sup> Conover uses "meeting house" to mean white clapboard with a front central spire. This is quite different from the spireless, non-descript meeting house of early Methodism. He also reminds us that, while building materials and even size may have been different, the nineteenth century church was largely influenced by England's Sir Christopher Wren, resulting in an abundance of Georgian and Palladian styles. Again, we must

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<sup>12</sup>Handy, 51.

<sup>13</sup>Conover, 63.

emphasize that this applied largely to the eastern part of the United States, and then mostly to urban areas, something Conover fails to note.

In the west the variety was much broader, because the frontier spirit remained in the churches longer, especially in the far west. However, even western urban and settled areas also began to establish somewhat churchy looking buildings. A turn through the photographs in Early Churches of Washington State<sup>14</sup> illustrates an enormous variety. Many churches followed the pattern of the New England Congregational, white sided, spired church. Others, however, are lovingly built of logs or rough hewn timber, surprisingly moving in their rusticity. Once in a while they even break from the four sided rectangle into octagonal or round structures. One can only speculate what changes in worship style might have accompanied these unorthodox structures set in the middle of Washington's frontier.

By the middle of the century, Methodism had arrived. Its influence was widespread and it had gained particular status and stature in the urban north and, to a lesser degree, the urban south. It began to reflect an ever growing preference for more formal, structured, even "traditional", worship. During the first half of the nineteenth century, as Methodism gained respectability, it also gained a desire for these more formal structures of worship. However, there appears to have been little pressure upon the institutional church for uniformity from congregation to congregation. Thus, for a while, increasing institutionalization remained largely on the local level. So, Methodism retained its well-deserved reputation as an enthusiastic, evangelistic denomination, particularly in the South and West, even as it gained stability and structure.

Eventually, this "institutionalizing" effect began to generate forms of worship that reflected the changing trends at a more hierarchical level. By the 1880's regular

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<sup>14</sup>Esther Pearson, Early Churches of Washington State (Seattle, Univ. of Washington Press, 1980).

orders of Sunday service were generally in use in both the North and South. An order of public worship was adopted in the M.E. Church in 1896 which was printed in the front of the hymnal.<sup>15</sup> Then, on January 7, 1898, the Joint Commission on Federation, resolved, "that we recommend the taking of prompt steps for the preparation of a common catechism, a common hymn book, and a common order of public worship, and that other branches of Methodism be invited to cooperate in this undertaking."<sup>16</sup> This trend continued through the turn of the century. Published in 1905, the joint hymnal for the North and South churches marked a turning point for Methodist worship. Methodist congregations now had worship as formal as they could desire to match their impressive edifices. This must have created a wide variety in forms and styles of Methodist worship. Central, urban congregations of status may have followed the General church guidelines for common liturgy and catechism where western rural congregations may have had highly informal revivalistic gatherings. There was surely an infinite variety spanning the extremes.

The History of Methodism gives us an interesting picture of how this "arrival" affected the architecture of Methodism:

The prosperity of the time, together with Methodism's pride of "arrival," reflected itself in church architecture and construction. Heretofore satisfied with a nondescript log cabin or frame building for worship, Methodists competed with much vigor with the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians in the construction of elaborate Gothic, Romanesque, and Classic structures; as early as 1852 the Episcopal Address affirmed that "very costly edifices lay heavy taxes on our pecuniary resources; and do not tend to edification or godliness, but rather gender pride." The defenders of the "gilded church," however, affirmed that the magnificent cathedrals were merely representative of the new social and economic stature of the membership and an "inspiration to lavish gifts and noble achievements"...it was clear to many that metropolitan Methodism was catering to the possessors of wealth, style, and fashion.<sup>17</sup>

This attitude toward building certainly indicates the increasing affluence of Methodist

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<sup>15</sup>Norwood, 363.

<sup>16</sup>Burke, 3: 413.

<sup>17</sup>Burke, 3: 321.

congregations. Norwood places the beginning of this trend around 1855 with the erection in Pittsburgh of the first Methodist Gothic church building in the United States:

Thought was given to provision for choir and organ. Participation by the congregation was encouraged, but increasingly channeled along lines which discouraged the spontaneous shouting and free testimony of former years.<sup>18</sup>

From where did this desire for Gothic buildings come? No doubt, some of the impetus was the wish to properly house the increasingly formal worship of the increasingly affluent and influential congregations of metropolitan Methodism. There may, however, have been a fundamental theology about the nature of Christian society at work as well. Norris K. Smith, speaking to the architects of the late 1970's and early 1980's, suggests that these buildings grew, at least in part, from a desire to recreate Christian society at its finest. He asserts:

Virtually every church edifice of any size, Catholic or Protestant, that has been erected during the past one hundred and thirty-five years has been designed on the basis of historicist assumptions. Between 1850 and 1950 the vast majority of churches were built in one or another of the medieval styles--Byzantine, Romanesque or Gothic--in the belief that there had existed in the Middle Ages a Christian society that had brought forth a pervasively Christian culture.<sup>19</sup>

The strength of this trend is exhibited by its near century span and the extent to which much subsequent literature devoted itself to the attack on such thought.

Methodism also became a denomination strongly associated with social improvement. In urban areas particularly, Methodist churches were highly sympathetic to the social gospel. A denomination that had always found its niche among the uneducated, the oppressed and the poor was very receptive to a theology that so clearly affirmed in academic spheres what they had so long felt to be the case in people's lives. So, while they were building newly formal houses of worship,

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<sup>18</sup>Norwood, 326.

<sup>19</sup>Norris K. Smith, "On Building Churches," Communio: International Catholic Review 6 (Fall 1979): 259.

Methodists were also developing the complex of community buildings we now associate with a church plant. They realized that in addition to a worship center they would also have need of rooms for the Sunday School that was so foundational to the denomination. The various women's missionary societies also found that they would need space in these new church complexes. A church plant that served the practical as well as spiritual need of the the community would prove to be Methodism's most distinctive contribution to the shape of church architecture.

In the 1920's, Elbert M. Conover wrote about the state of American church building in general, and about large urban church situations in particular:

Has the cathedral a place in American life? Knowing the power of the Cathedral in Christian civilization we are led to ask, May there not be a place for it in American Protestant life? As a center of unity in which representatives of well-established churches would co-operate; as a great school of religion, religious art and music for the clergy and laity; as an expression of the finest religious culture and devotion in a city; as a stimulus to better architecture; and as a center for great services of united worship and forceful preaching, the cathedral might be made a great asset in a modern city. Churches near the cathedral sit might devote their property equities to the cathedral enterprise and receive in return titles to chapels in the cathedral group.<sup>20</sup>

As the director of the Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal church, one can assume he was speaking especially to his brother and sister Methodist churches. He reflects the kind of thinking that had American Methodist churches building as large and impressively as possible with grand dreams of larger community co-operation. The churches had gained a great deal in popularity, though not so much as they were to enjoy a quarter of a century later, and they wished to build in a way that would reflect this status and wealth.

Conover remarks that during this period, following what he considered to be something of a "dark ages" in church building, the nature of the church in, one supposes, the urban areas is being revitalized. He defines the "dark ages" as the result

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<sup>20</sup>Conover, 57.



of architects spending their time and creative effort on civic and commercial projects, and general lack of cultural appreciation and the design mistakes of what we now call Art Deco, that is, pseudo gothic, unsupported pillars, mixing of styles, etc.<sup>21</sup> During this time, Conover feels, these handicaps had prevented good architecture from having its place in church building. Judging by the examples he cites as excellent, we can see that he is largely promoting the Neo-Gothic monuments that dominated urban church building in the first quarter of this century.

His concept of a "cathedral" is notable. It seems to reflect what may have been the thinking of those who built Methodism's Neo-Gothic and Neo-Byzantine revival churches. It is also remarkable to note how out of place his remarks would be today, hardly fifty years later, in the United Methodist church. In the 1980's, few United Methodist churches would even consider the possibility of giving another church title to its property. Common sentiment would be horrified at the prospect of endowing the large urban church with any kind of status that might indicate that its intrinsic value is somehow greater than its smaller urban and suburban sisters.

However, it is important to observe that those churches currently in the vanguard of success--churches which enjoy large attendance, enthusiastic commitment and which appeal to a younger generation of new Christians--are, on the West Coast at least, those churches which sound very much like Conover's description of the cathedral. They are large, and in some cases build awesome buildings. In most cases, regardless of the physical plant, they do, in fact, have extensive educational programs for children and, especially, adults. They have impressive programs of music and performance, run schools for the education of clergy and laity across denominational lines, support television and radio broadcast ministries and invariably have well-known and dynamic preachers. It is also important to note that these "cathedral

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<sup>21</sup>Conover, 65.

endeavors" do not build their cathedral-like places of worship until after their programming is well established and there is clear need for such a prestigious and impressive physical plant. They then often spawn the smaller, localized places of worship as part of their larger outreach program. It is surprisingly successful because so many young families are willing to continue their weekday commute to a church that emphasizes high quality programming rather than local community.

A captivating overview of Methodist church building may be seen in "The seven ages of McKendree Church, Nashville, Tennessee."<sup>22</sup> The tastes in Methodist architecture can be traced for over a century in the building of this one church. The earliest building is fieldstone and log joists. It is rectangular, has absolutely no embellishment and minimal windows. The next building is of similar material, but has the appearance of a home with a small wing to the right of the main, two story building. It is shown with some pleasant landscaping and some small ornamentation around the door. From 1818-1833 there is a brick building of some severity, but clearly in a more urban environment. It is wedged between two other buildings, has a stair to the entrance, some additional windows and a decorative window above the door. There are still no outward symbols of Christianity identifying this as a church. These three buildings most definitely fit our image of "meeting house" rather than "church."

From 1833-1870 a decidedly Gothic structure is presented that bears no resemblance to its predecessors in size or appearance. It has three spires, probably a nave, aisles, apse and other Gothic spaces. Ornamented in Gothic style, the drawing shows that it now towers over its urban neighbors and sports a cross high in the air. 1879-1906 shows a somewhat smaller building, simpler in style. This photograph shows a single spire of three parts. It is a kind of broad version of a New England style clapboard church. The 1905-1910 building looks very much like the Gothic structure of

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<sup>22</sup>Burke, 3: plate II following 342.

two generations before, leading me to believe that the earlier drawing was an artist's rendering of a goal, which was not completed until later. However, the central tower does not have its spire, but the two outer ones do. There is an abundance of ornamentation and there is little doubt that this is intended to "look like a church." The final drawing, labeled 1910, is rather byzantine in appearance with a broad facade, two side towers and a squat, central dome. It has some classical touches in the form of columns and pilasters. Less ornamental, it is still an impressive edifice.

Following World War II, Methodist building took a new turn. Those writing about church buildings and those building them began to look to "modernism" as a viable, even unique expression of how to define worship space. In the next chapters we will look at the thinking behind the rash of building in the 1950's and where trends in worship and building are heading currently.

## CHAPTER 3

### Currents in Architecture

The king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you." (2 Samuel 7: 2-3)

A natural break occurs mid-twentieth century in the dialogue among architects and theologians on the subject of church building. In the years before and between the World Wars several works were written on the issues surrounding worship and the building of worship spaces in the United States, but little appeared after that until the late fifties and early sixties. Then, in the late sixties and early seventies the mainline Protestant church went from "boom" to "bust" as it was no longer socially requisite to be a member of a church. But in the seventies and eighties the church no longer had what Kennon Callahan calls a "fifties church culture"<sup>1</sup> from which to draw and in which to work. Trying to keep step with a national sentiment that rejected cookie-cutter religion, many books and articles written in the sixties and seventies focus on "innovative" or "contemporary" design and spend no little amount of time arguing the case for "modern" buildings. While the first innovations were superficial, they eventually produced a re-evaluation of the theology of the building, a kind of openness to "modern" buildings, and a rethinking of the purpose of space in service to worship. This process went through several steps

First, as Christ-Janer and Foley in their chapter on Methodism remind us, this change of thought had its foundation earlier in the century.

Methodists may be credited with the great change in American protestant churches from sanctuaries alone to a complex of buildings...For the Methodists have always been the great "doers" of the Christian faith, and inevitably they expressed this character in their

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<sup>1</sup>Kennon.Callahan, In remarks to a seminar in the San Diego District of the United Methodist Church. January 1988

architecture....When finally [the artistic element in a place of worship] was considered, the Methodists, like most other American churches, fell under the sway of the Gothic Revival...The gothic style...contradicts the very fundamentals upon which Methodism is based.<sup>2</sup>

The encyclopaedic History of Methodism remarks on this mid-century development:

[In the 1950's] the creative and fresh approaches to church architecture were a sign of an awakening interest in religion and the outward forms of its expression. New construction materials as well as new ideas were boldly employed in the erection of many sanctuaries and educational buildings. While some Methodist congregations were rediscovering the beauties of traditional Gothic architecture, others joined in frank experimentation as to placement of the communion table, the pulpit, and the lectern, the disposition of the choir, and the pattern of seating in the sanctuary. As a result Methodist churches, which had often looked like assembly halls, began to have a more distinctive appearance and to suggest their function as places of worship.<sup>3</sup>

In his clear, succinct book, Architecture for Worship, E. A. Sovik speaks about this usage of modern materials in a less gentle way. He suggests that because the first half of the twentieth century was an age of technology it is to be expected that the elements of building that first reflect the new age were technical aspects. But, he says:

This gave the illusion of ancient forms, but the result is more like stage scenery than authentic architecture. Indeed it is two steps away from authentic architecture: derivative forms built by artificial means.<sup>4</sup>

This change had been happening for quite some time in the larger, more urban areas. Now, however, the more rural and, especially, the suburban churches were adopting the technology of the present with the artificial forms of the immediate past. Those who moved to the newly growing suburbs, still returned to "old first church" downtown, and for a while the suburban churches followed rather than set the trends. The History of Methodism goes on to admit that:

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<sup>2</sup>Albert Christ-Janer and Mary Mix Foley, Modern Church Architecture (New York: Mc Graw-Hall, 1962), 192.

<sup>3</sup>Burke, 3: 560.

<sup>4</sup>E. A. Sovik, Architecture for Worship (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973 ), 25.

Worship is another value that bows before Methodist practicality. We are not distinguished for liturgical excellence. Our Akron-plan churches, prized for their usefulness, have kept us out of the van of architectural advance. Superb in organization, strong in program, skillful in raising money, resourceful in meeting emergencies, Methodism has fallen behind its sister communions in those areas of experience where the practical has no primacy.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1947 publication of W.M. Birks' The Chancel: Before and After there is a very revealing look at attempts to "modernize" the chancel areas of churches.<sup>6</sup> Page after page is illustrated with photos of Akron style arrangements with chancels that look very much like Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple. They are built in a semi-circular fashion with the chancel area often in the corner of a square space, choir behind the raised pulpit, small communion table in front of the pulpit area and, often as not, a balcony. The before and after photographs are a fascinating comment on these early attempts to "modernize." They are invariably cleaned up and less cluttered. They usually refocus the worshipper's attention on the altar area or on the cross where the previous point of focus had been the pulpit. In most cases the duplication of having an altar table at the back wall of the chancel as well as a communion table near the front has been eliminated. Usually this is accomplished by pulling the altar forward a little and removing the communion table.

The most striking change, however, is the simplification of line. The chancels illustrated are simply less busy, less ornate in the "after" pictures than they are in the "before" pictures. However, there is little rethinking of the chancel placement or arrangement over all. Although there is less clutter, there is also invariably a divided chancel. Some are an elongated, gothic style divided chancel, others are the rounded-stage-from-the-corner-of-the-room that so marks the Akron style favored by Methodist congregations in the first half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>5</sup>Burke, 3: 626.

<sup>6</sup>W. M. Birks, The Chancel: Before and After (Toronto: United Church Pub. House, 1947 ).

So, while the first step was to see a whole complex of buildings serving the church's purpose, the second step toward current thinking was the rejection of Gothic and other historicist models. Christ-Janer and Foley illustrate this "change" with two photographs about which they write: "significantly, the two churches shown here reject entirely such traditional religious symbolism."<sup>7</sup> They interpret "gothic" to mean a certain form of decoration, because one of their illustrations (First Church, Midlands, Michigan) retains the long, narrow, divided-chancel, hierarchical, face-the-front seating arrangement of the Gothic. Its modernness is in its simplicity, its severity, and its cleanness of line, not in a rethinking of space in service of liturgy. It is a clean attractive version of this elongated form from the first half of the century. It is nicely re-done, but not actually rethought. They have eliminated Gothic decoration in favor of "modern" decoration. And this is quite a departure from what, in the first part of the century, was an almost forgone conclusion about how churches should look.

This is working toward the larger rethinking process that follows in just a few years. These illustrations do not demonstrate a basic rethinking of worship space, or its impact; but they do introduce the concept of "less is more" into the chancel area. They do reconsider and reject the idea that an ornate chancel area is the best altar to offer God. They do, in a way, open the door to more comprehensive changes by starting with the part of the worship space that is most central, most looked at and, arguably, most controversial and emotional.

In the late fifties and early sixties, the emphasis was on "modern" buildings for churches. With the changing tide in architecture, artistic souls on the church front wanted to bring the church up to speed with secular architecture. However, the task was difficult and the fact remains with us today: the church is no longer the

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<sup>7</sup>Christ-Janer and Foley, 192.

vanguard of art and architecture and hasn't been for sometime. Thus, it became something of a struggle financially and psychologically to find in the church a place for the art of creating a worship space. Usefulness and economy were, and have continued to be, the first priority for a building congregation.

In 1957, more than a quarter of a century ago, John Know Shear edited a book in which he attempted to bring church architecture into the twentieth century. On the first page he states, "For three generations the depressing effect of bad architecture has been visited upon the worshippers of America."<sup>8</sup> He goes on to argue that Neo-gothic is an unimaginative effort to declare status and that churches built on the art-deco mold succumbed to the worst in architecture, loss of functionality. He fully supports the concept of "modern" or "contemporary" architecture, by which he seems to mean a simplicity and cleanness of line, an unpretension of building materials and an emphasis on rethinking light, shape and space. In short, he wishes the churches to open their doors to the contemporary in architecture, rather than looking backward several, or more, generations.

One of the articles included in his book is a reprint of a letter first published in Architectural Record in 1954. It is Alwin L. Rubin's letter of advice to pastors entitled, "Would You Build Another Contemporary Church?" He admonishes, "Are you convinced that beauty can be achieved from simple things like light, space, color, texture....Convince yourself thoroughly that you want a contemporary design for your new church..."<sup>9</sup>

The use of the word "simple" here is revealing. It illustrates the extent to which "modern" was used as a reaction against ornateness rather than necessarily including a rethinking of worship from its theological foundations. It is also

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<sup>8</sup>John Know Shear, ed., Religious Buildings for Today (New York: F.W. Dodge, 1957), 1.

<sup>9</sup>Shear, 34.



interesting to note that this pastor feels that the decision to "go modern" should be made prior to any other decision. Rather than offering simplicity or sparseness as a design option, this statement encourages such as the ultimate in contemporariness. It is a sort of status reversal, whereby "contemporariness" becomes the locus of status rather than ornateness.

Stemming from this are several works in the sixties that do, in fact, bring the rethinking process into the church architectural sphere. Until this time it seems that the rethinking of space and design had gone on primarily in the secular sphere, with the results being brought into the church somewhat arbitrarily. The turning away from gothic ornateness did not necessarily translate into a turning away from gothic space definition. For many of the churches illustrated in the aforementioned books "modern" meant simplicity of decoration, but did not usually mean reevaluation of space and design as a whole as it did in secular architecture. With the publication of Peter Hammond's book, Liturgy and Architecture, in 1961 and Victor Fiddes' The Architectural Requirements of Protestant Worship in the same year, we begin to see a broader overhauling of worship concepts and their relationship to worship space. These two books mark a turning point in church architecture and literature. Here, we see how rethinking the art of liturgy impacts the art of space definition. Hammond and Fiddes introduce a modern, organic approach into the church architecture discussion. Suddenly, the question, "Does it look like a church?" gains a whole new meaning. Now we begin to see the foundation upon which our current thinking about liturgy, worship space and art is built.

Hammond's preface heralds the beginning of a vast rethinking of the design process: "Architecture is primarily a matter of the significant definition of space: not of artistic symbols...."<sup>10</sup> And this is just the beginning of Hammond's insistence that

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<sup>10</sup>Peter Hammond, Liturgy and Architecture (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1961), xiii.

churches start from the most basic identification of their needs before they determine the shape of their worship space. He reminds those who do not already know that "functionalism [substitute "modernism," "contemporary design," or any one of a number of others] is not a style, but a way of looking at things" [emphasis added].<sup>11</sup> He stresses the need to look beyond the superficials of designs, the surface decorations and encourages the church to do what secular architecture had been doing; that is, to examine the need and purpose for building in the first place, then to adapt the values of art to that clearly defined purpose. For a church that was a product of the fifties' burgeoning, suburban, Protestant church, this must have been difficult news indeed. It may be no easier for those building now.

Hammond is far from alone in his search for increasing depth and freshness in the approach to church sanctuary building. In more recent literature architects and theologians alike disparage the "modernism" of the fifties and sixties as energetically as their predecessors denounced the imitative Gothic of the previous three decades.

In 1982 James L. Doom wrote this about twentieth century Gothic:

Do you remember the kinds of buildings in which we worshipped in 1958? There were two kinds. We had a 19th century theater with a sloping floor concentric pews, with the pulpit on a platform that looked like a stage....Now that form has one advantage: the people saw each other and the pastor saw the people. But the people were passive. Then we had the 20th century monastery for contrast. The long narrow space isolated the leaders of worship at the far end of the building. The choir, robed like monks, intervened between the people and the table. The people were in the holy place, but the pastor and the choir were isolated in the holy of holies.<sup>12</sup>

Doom has oversimplified somewhat, but his frustration is understandable. Churches were built without regard for their effect on worship and worshippers. He continues to stress the passive nature of the congregation in these designs throughout

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<sup>11</sup>Hammond, 8.

<sup>12</sup>James L.Doom, "Where Do We Go From Here?" Reformed Liturgy and Music 16 (Spring 1982): 58.

his article. He suggests that passiveness in worship and education caused most adults to focus their energies into fellowship groups, thus myriad "class" lounges filled with the memorabilia of a small but committed fellowship. He questions the youth rooms and gymnasiums of these churches, perceptively inquiring if the focus on recreation actually brought young people into the church in a way that kept them there. His strongest comment is with regard to the Gothic and Colonial style of building: "It was bastard Gothic or it was bastard Colonial because we are neither Gothic or Colonial people." In addition, while the Gothic edifices of the eighteenth century may have reflected a theology that idealized the medieval Christian culture and wished to evoke it, the Gothic structures of the forties and fifties probably did not.

Doom is not the only critic of the building boom of the fifties. Commenting on the failure of "modernism" Joseph Sittler asks:

Cannot the church do better than to house the gravity of its functions in the busy, nervous, ridiculous buildings it often selects?...Too many church related buildings look like they could just as well house some insurance company.<sup>13</sup>

The net result to worship and theology, asserts Sittler, is that we "affirm grace and create banality."<sup>14</sup> Thus, the passivity of worshippers and the dwindling vitality of the church, while not attributable to the buildings themselves, may be reflected in them and fostered by them.

Kaemarcik suggests that some of the cause is our lack of faith-filled vision. He remarks that "the development of programs for new church buildings has suffered from denominational volunteerism, consequently their professional quality has atrophied."<sup>15</sup> However, what Kaemarcik calls "denominational volunteerism," might

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<sup>13</sup>Joseph Sittler, "Provocations on the Church and the Arts," Christian Century 101 (Mar 19-26, 1986): 292.

<sup>14</sup>Sittler, 292

<sup>15</sup>Frank Kaemarcik, "The State of the Art of our Churches Today," Worship 60 (Sept. 86): 455.

also be viewed as the recognition that buildings should reflect their congregations rather than their architects. Even Sovik, largely condemnatory of the recent past acknowledges that the effort to bring "modernism" into church architecture is, at least, expressive of the sentiment that

the church wishes to be understood as a lively institution, related to the currents of the life around [it], responsive to the twentieth century, speaking the language of the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

The pattern of re-examination and renewal is not new to the church. The architects and theologians that are suggesting that the building efforts of the first half of this century will not sustain us through the second half make a salient point which Hammond sums up admirably:

The history of the present renewal of church architecture shows that an architect cannot reasonably be expected to design a satisfactory church unless he [or she] is furnished with an adequate brief. It is only when the Church is prepared to face its responsibility for thinking out afresh its own raison d'etre, that of the building in which it meets for the liturgy...<sup>17</sup>

For many mainline Protestant churches, this could be a difficult and painful process, for the established denominations in the United States, by and large, suffer from the fate of all long-lived institutions. That is, the survival of the institution becomes as important, if not more important, than the reason for its establishment in the first place. But churches that are contemplating or engaged in building are at an ideal point to re-examine and renew their raison d'etre. Developing a building program can be a way to insure that the gospel remains at the heart of its work and worship. Says Edward Frey, "At the beginning of building for worship, everyone should be a theologian."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Sovik, Architecture for Worship 29.

<sup>17</sup>Hammond, 9.

<sup>18</sup>Edward S. Frey, This Before Architecture (Jenkintown, PA: Foundation Books, 1963), 15.

## CHAPTER 4

### Directions in Worship

At the beginning of building for worship, everyone should be a theologian. Frey stresses that program, theology and informed conviction come before architecture. So, before building a worship space a congregation must understand its place on the American theological spectrum and must have a clear vision for its programming. Most of all it must be informed of worship directions and convinced of its own goals for worship. This last is most critical. Individuals and congregations must realize that their conviction is to God and Jesus Christ. Devotion to a particular church is an extension of that conviction but is not the conviction itself. Understanding this, a church can focus on the fundamental purpose of its worship with an open mind. When persons are committed to the church before Christ, and this state of affairs comes about for a wide variety of reasons, it is difficult to distinguish between the church's reason for being and its need to survive. I hope a church that is in a position to build is not faced with the need to survive as its primary reason for its building project; however, there are certainly churches that undertake building projects as a form of church renewal. This misdirection of purpose will become apparent when a church examines its mission and ministry thoroughly before committing to a building program. One sure sign of a church that is building for the wrong reasons (and thus likely to build the wrong sort of building) is one where the process of evaluating the mission, the ministry and the intention of worship are not readily seen as essential to the process of designing a building.

While we are concerned here especially with worship activities, Frey's general statement is apt:

Only the congregation that knows what it believes will be able to

furnish the architect with the data. The program of the church whose people will not think under God degenerates into [a collection of secular groups bidding for attention]--badges and buttons, banners, bingo and bake sales...and a theology without particularity, witless and anemic, with no power to save.<sup>1</sup>

Strong words, indeed! The sort every pastor likes to preach once in a while. Yet, it is essential for a congregation to hear and accept them when they intend to spend the single largest investment of time and money in their lifetime on a building for which a solid spiritual foundation must be laid. A church must have an educated concept of worship and its direction to build a space that provides satisfaction for future generations.

This is encouraged by the relationship between architect and congregation. James Doom has criticism for both parties whom he holds equally responsible for the church's past building failures. He feels that congregations are not able to articulate their program well, and that architects are hesitant to relinquish control:

Architects get a bit edgy when I say the building committee defines the program for them, because the architect is accustomed and skilled at drawing purpose out of the client, and defining purpose for the client, so that the client can see it and say, "Yes." But when the architect's client is a congregation of Presbyterians, each one accustomed to doing what is right in its own sight, you'd better let representatives of the congregation analyze their purpose for you.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously, he could be talking about almost any American denomination steeped in democratic volunteerism. Ultimately, he says churches must realize that "God is our source for mission. The congregation is our source for purpose. A building committee is our source for program. And the architect must be our source for design."<sup>3</sup>

So, understanding a church's theological foundation and being willing to re-examine it yet again in light of a building project is the greatest part of helping the church let go of its preconceived ideas about what worship space should look like.

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<sup>1</sup>Frey, 19.

<sup>2</sup>Doom, 57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

This can be a uniquely creative time in a church's ministry. Fortunately, church architecture perceives itself to be in the service of this fundamental re-thinking process. Says Fiddes:

The present is both an experimental and a creative period for church design. Having long since broken from imitative styles, architecture has adapted itself both structurally and artistically to the new possibilities that new materials and new techniques in construction provide."<sup>4</sup>

So, a church must be ready to answer the basic questions about its worship space with as much open-mindedness as possible. Hammond is clear that this openness extends to all possible forms of architectural expression. Unlike Pastor Rubin, who feels that one must be convinced from the beginning to "go modern" or not, Hammond insists on complete openness to both old and new, familiar and unfamiliar:

There is no particular virtue in an unconventional plan--any more than in unusual detail. The commonest type of aberration is that which results from the desire to exploit new structural forms for their own sake...the outcome is often very exciting from a purely aesthetic standpoint; unfortunately the success or failure of a church, as of any other building has to be judged in the light of other than purely aesthetic criteria. They must work as buildings for corporate worship. [emphasis added].<sup>5</sup>

Edward Frey confirms this from a more theologically expressed point of view when he quotes Von Ogden Vogt:

If, then, it is really God's House and not merely a convenient place in which to worship [God], any true architectural expression must recognize the qualities and character of the real Owner....To build the house of God and make beauty, dignity and spirituality, as expressed in architecture, entirely secondary to good heating and acoustics, is to build God's house without God.<sup>6</sup>

By this, I don't think he means to suggest that God requires heating and acoustics, but rather that the people of God in worship require such things and thus, aesthetics are lost on people who are cold and can't hear. Aesthetics must be designed to work in

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<sup>4</sup>Victor Fiddes, The Architectural Requirements of Protestant Worship, (Toronto: Reyerson, 1961), 2.

<sup>5</sup>Hammond, Towards a Church Architecture, 10.

<sup>6</sup>Frey, 17.

conjunction with the liturgy to create a total environment of worship. Art that serves to inspire worship independent of liturgy is just that, art. Religious art, even. But it is not worship art.

Every congregation, and most especially its building committee, must grapple with its communal understanding of worship. This is the center of their theological task. They must be prepared to examine their communal understanding with an openness to some correctives. This can be an opportunity to teach concepts about worship that edify and unify a congregation, that situate it within its historical context (insofar as that can be determined) and stimulate it to rethink some assumptions in light of current trends. It can be an opportunity to acquaint and reacquaint a congregation with its liturgical starting point. For United Methodist congregations this is The Book of Worship. It can then look at denominational trends for the future. This last is especially important, since a building will be built in service to the future, not as a monument to the past. The more thoroughly a congregation understands where it has been, and the more clearly it sees where denominational and ecumenical worship is headed, the more satisfying the end product will be.

There are two factors at play in general considerations about worship trends in United Methodist churches and in Protestantism generally. The first is the individual nature of worship from congregation to congregation. The other is a climate of rapid change in liturgical thinking.

There is great randomness among Protestants, especially in free and non-liturgical traditions. In Methodism, there is freedom to go very far afield in this randomness, and there is also an opportunity to be quite uniform in worship. Our Book of Worship outlines some fundamental orders of worship through which we might all worship uniformly. However, unlike our Anglican sisters and brothers, there is no requirement, in fact, little encouragement, to stick very closely to such



orders. So while we cannot turn to The Book of Worship to find uniform style of worship for all United Methodist Churches, we do find in it a basic pattern common to most.

Victor Fiddes offers a beginning point when he says that "the basic requirement of Protestant church architecture is that of a shared ministry of Word and Sacrament which is carried on in an environment of spiritual intimacy."<sup>7</sup> What he means by this is that the preaching of the Word and the sharing in the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are uniformly regarded as the primary activities in a place of worship. His concept of spiritual intimacy is two-fold. First, that the worshipper must feel somehow that worship brings him or her into closer relationship with God. Second, that corporate worship is just that, corporate. So, for Victor Fiddes, a corporate worship space must contribute to our awareness that we are a part of something that needs other persons to be complete and whole.

These thoughts provide a good starting place for a building committee. As it begins to formulate its own theology of worship space, a Committee might ask several questions: What would it look like for a worship space to emphasize preaching, Baptism and Eucharist? Are these three of equal importance? If so, how do we reflect that? A study group or committee can surface the variety of experiences among them by sharing about the worship spaces that they remember, including the one they worship in now. Which of these three activities, Baptism, Eucharist and proclamation, receives the greatest emphasis in worship? Which receives the greatest emphasis in the design of the building? Is it possible to emphasize them equally when they do not occur with symmetrical frequency in most United Methodist churches? Here we have a dual question: what do we desire for the form of our worship and worship space with regard to the three main activities of preaching, Baptism and

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<sup>7</sup>Frey, 6

## Eucharist?

Fiddes suggests that we begin by recognizing that our standard of Christian worship is less like Isaiah 6:1-8 and more like the liturgy of Gethsemane and the Upper Room. However, as a church Methodists are not entirely comfortable with that assumption and have been wiggling inside of it ever since they began building. Fiddes observes:

This dichotomy in Methodist worship practices has persisted down to the present day both in England and in America and has reflected itself in the Architecture of Methodism. Methodist places of worship on both sides of the Atlantic vary in design from the simplest types of meeting house to the most elaborate structures designed for worship in the high church tradition.<sup>8</sup>

So, while we may affirm his general statement, our building practices indicate little uniformity of practice. While the randomness and individuality may remain (depending on how you look at it) a focus on the sacramental basics will help define the foundation of liturgical spaces.

Fiddes would have us believe that, by and large, the more elaborate structure and high church tradition reflect little of true spirituality:

Skillfully [sic] planned and beautifully appointed, these churches nevertheless conform more to the sentimental tastes of an affluent society than to the simply-stated needs of a community that is renewing itself in the fellowship of its Lord and Master.<sup>9</sup>

Undeniably true, in some cases. But I think it is unrealistic to assume that affluence precludes spirituality and the search for spiritual meaning. At the heart of what he is saying is a good fundamental warning for the beginning stages of planning and decision making. Do we make our decisions based on how much we can buy or on our spiritual need? It may well be that a congregation can be better served by spending less money rather than more. Certainly, Frey suggests that money spent on a high

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<sup>8</sup>Fiddes, 47.

<sup>9</sup>Fiddes, 59

quality sound system is at least as holy an expenditure as a cross made from expensive materials.

In addition to our need to recognize variation in Christian worship is the need to recognize the changing nature of it. Nearly all of the most recent literature on worship and architecture either states or assumes a highly fluid situation. Sovik suggests that this change is not simply a transitional phase, but a completely new understanding:

...if one expects that there is to be variety responding not only to the particularities of geography, but also to the course of time, the logic of building flexible kinds of places is paramount. The currents of liturgical change are not directed now simply toward replacing the fixed forms of an earlier age with a new set of fixed forms which will hopefully congeal in better patterns. The principle now operating is that change is to be continual.<sup>10</sup>

James Doom and James White agree. White considers that, in addition to utility, flexibility is a most critical consideration for church buildings. He feels that the most difficult buildings are those built a short while ago before congregations had generally accepted the reality of change. He strongly believes that a most important new element in church architecture is the frank acceptance of change.<sup>11</sup>

In the United Methodist church we see clearly this condition of continual change. Beginning with the first "Alternative Service" in 1972, the General Church has been exploring great change in the liturgies for The Book of Worship. That process is not yet complete, further indication that space built for worship in the future cannot be too heavily defined by the worship trends of the present.

This, however, does not necessarily reduce worship space to an undefined warehouse. Harold Daniels reminds us that:

In speaking of the need for simplicity and flexibility, one should not

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<sup>10</sup>E. A. Sovik, "Notes on Sacred Space," Christian Century 99 (March 17, 1982): 365.

<sup>11</sup>White, 93.

conclude that what is being described is the typical multi-purpose hall which is often erected as the first stage of a congregation's activities.<sup>12</sup>

He goes on to suggest that such a minimal worship space does not help one to be sensitive to the numinous, to the mystery and majesty of God. Space that is ordinary, banal or ugly does little to serve the Christian community and dwarfs the human spirit.

The concept of an attractive, permanent rather than temporary, mystery inducing place that still encourages flexibility and change is not impossible to imagine. And the illustrations in Sovik's Architecture for Worship are very illuminating. He suggests that a place that is ultimately faithful to the Christian vision will be a room that has no explicitly Christian images, but rather is prepared for worship by "bringing in and arranging the furnishing and accoutrements of the cult."<sup>13</sup> This preparation becomes a kind of worship for those who participate in it and a part of the corporate worship. It allows a congregation to focus worship in different places in their sanctuary and to carry some symbols of their corporate worship into other spaces (i. e. planning retreats, outdoor worship, ecumenical gatherings) thus defining them as worship space.

Another possibility is to use sophisticated lighting to delineate space, much the way a dramatic production would. This not only encourages thoughtful change, but enables a congregation to make seasonal and festival rearrangements and, again, to focus worship in a variety of locations in the room. These are but two possibilities which emphasize the gathered people rather than the gathering place as the locus of what is holy.

What, then, are the basic premises which contemporary worship leaders consider important? I suggest that four basic concepts emerge from the discussion of

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<sup>12</sup>Harold Daniels, "Pulpit, Font and Table," Reformed Liturgy and Music 16 (Spring 1982: 64.

<sup>13</sup>Sovik, Architecture for Worship, 37.

recent years: intimacy, corporateness, mysterium and authenticity. There is, in our time, a recurrence of the desire to recapture the idea of early Christian worship. As part of this, Dom Gregory Dix has constructed a definitive work about the shape and context, the rhythm and pattern of Christian worship. His conclusive comment about the early Christian pattern is this:

When all is said and done, the impression left by the early evidence about the celebration of the Eucharist is one not so much of simplicity as of great directness, as became a deliberately "domestic" act.<sup>14</sup>

From this fundamental notion Frédéric Debuyst constructs his idea of what worship should be. He focuses on the domestic and intimate nature of the church and on the celebrative nature of the ritual. He conceives of the worship space as:

a kind of great living room, a place where the faithful come together to meet the Lord, and one another in the Lord...the specific character of this meeting [is] the context of a celebration...meeting in church and sharing in the liturgy constitute by their very nature a festive occasion.<sup>15</sup>

Debuyst calls this a Paschal meeting-room, by which he intends to suggest that while a worship space is unique by the fact of the action that takes place there, the activity of the Eucharist is highly intimate and personal and should take place in a most hospitable atmosphere. He states outright his objection to the monument idea for a church, "a church is not an architectural monument built to symbolize God's glory." <sup>16</sup> He feels that there is no intimacy suggested in this model and offers a concept for future building:

The churches of tomorrow, if they are to be really good churches, will have to look more like simple houses than like the churches of today or yesterday...will have to combine the freedom of the modern house with the basic qualities of the early Christian churches....<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Dix, 141.

<sup>15</sup>Frédéric Debuyst, Modern Architecture and Christian Celebration (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1968), 9-10.

<sup>16</sup>Debuyst, 30.

<sup>17</sup>Debuyst, 30.

Obviously, Debuyst prefers the house-church concept upon which the early Christian worship was built. While he does not take into consideration the extent to which the early church met in houses out of necessity, rather than preference, he does state a strong case for current building projects to make such a choice. He clearly places the current choice in cultural context:

On the human plane, the Christians did not start from zero. They were the products of an ancient civilization, of a living and continually renewed culture...the artists had learned their skill at the heart of the culture. When they were commissioned to celebrate in images the great themes of salvation history...they naturally drew from the treasure of forms and "types" in which they had been reared."<sup>18</sup>

Such is also our choice, suggests Debuyst. We also start with the acknowledgement of what our cultural roots are.

To some extent this is a little simplistic, since Debuyst wishes to argue that the "house church" is our cultural starting point. It may well have been a starting point at one time, but it is now but one of a great many cultural images with which the twentieth century church might choose to celebrate.

The "house" idea is more appropriately used when asserting the importance of "family" as a concept for the body of Christ. The idea is that a house of worship "is not a shelter for an altar; it is a shelter for people"<sup>19</sup> Curtis Green further elaborates the familial metaphor when he states "the church...should furnish the 'family' a shelter which affords space in which to be spiritually washed, refreshed and embraced during the liturgy."<sup>20</sup> It is worth remembering that it is a symbolic home for a metaphorical family and literal interpretations of this artistic and theological concept can result in the sort of banality that architects and worship theologians argue against.

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<sup>18</sup>Debuyst, 74.

<sup>19</sup>Sovik, Architecture for Worship, 33.

<sup>20</sup>Curtis Green, "Imaginative Use of the Arts: Architectural and Visual," Word and World, 5: 304-310.

This idea is especially helpful when realistically considering many church building budgets. Most churches could not build a monument or a cathedral even if they wanted to. They usually have just about the same budget as someone building a large, innovative, original home. Debuyst also helps bring some balance back into our thinking, since the force of church building ideology has been of the monument mold. It is difficult to reconcile our desire to build a "house of God" with our desire to worship in a place that is comfortable. By providing such a strong theological argument for intimacy and hospitality, Debuyst gives the small and medium budgeted projects a solid basis from which to proceed. By using this perspective those who do not have millions to spend can intentionally choose a smaller scale with integrity rather than apology. I think this is important for smaller congregations to keep in mind. Many of them are smaller by choice, because they feel that the Christian concept of community is more fully realized in a group of less than many thousands. For these congregations, their self-understanding can be greatly enhanced by this concept of worship space as communal home. They can say with Debuyst that "church architecture, in the twentieth century, can have only one ambition, and that is to progress slowly...towards a great, combined human and Christian ideal: the concept of total hospitality."<sup>21</sup>

While the concept of intimacy is stressed in much of the literature, other important factors enter the discussion. The need for a more corporate understanding of worship is succinctly summed up by Carol Doran and Thomas Troeger when they observe that a good deal of confusion has resulted from the undue emphasis on individuality in our time.

Our general observation is that worship has become problematic for the churches with whom we have worked because the values of popular culture, particularly the high worth placed on the idiosyncratic self, have so pervaded these communities that the historical roots, theological

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<sup>21</sup>Debuyst, 41.

rationale and corporate character of worship have greatly diminished in the consciousness of church members.<sup>22</sup>

They do not suggest that a return to anything in the past is a solution, but that greater understanding of common heritage would help. This is not the equivalent of making every American a Thanksgiving pilgrim. Rather, it acknowledges the great cloud of witnesses, the primacy of grace for all, not just individuals and the importance of a reconciling congregation. All of this reinforces a sense of the transcendent. All this, they feel, has unfortunately bowed to people's immediate concerns and experiences. They stress the need to recapture the primal assumption that Christian worship is a gathering of the corporate body to praise God.

Space for worship should, therefore, help a congregation understand that its worship is basically communal. Harold Daniels stresses that, while many church buildings encourage an individualistic view of worship and contribute little to a corporate sense, "a building designed for corporate worship should somehow seem incomplete until the people gather together in it."<sup>23</sup>

Daniels also provides a note of balance when he acknowledges the need for mysterium in a worship space.

While worship's corporate aspect is fundamental, we must not lose the sense of the holy in our zeal to recover a communal sense. To replace the former otherworldliness with mere sociability would be to move from one extreme to another. The church is a community but it is a community bound together with its Lord.<sup>24</sup>

So, in addition to the need for intimacy and a sense of corporateness, which, to some extent complement each other, a third facet of a wholistic worship experience includes a sense of awe and mystery.

Influenced by Rudolf Otto's book The Idea of the Holy, Sovik interjects the

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<sup>22</sup>Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger, "Reclaiming the Corporate Self: The Meaning and Ministry of Worship in a Privatistic Culture," Worship 60 (May 1986): 200.

<sup>23</sup>Daniels, 63.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 64.



importance of the ineffability, the mysterium tremendum of religion. He suggests that, while intimacy is of the utmost concern, there is also a need for a sense of sacredness. Most people, he suggests, derive a sense of sacredness from a place because it has been the site of particularly historical events in their spiritual life or in the life of the spiritual community. While this is certainly true, he considers it a disadvantage because some poor buildings have become sacred as a result of this process. There then arises the desire to attribute this sacredness to a certain style of building and to attempt to capture the sacredness by duplicating the style. To the faithful of any congregation, their own church buildings are commonly thought of as sacred.

Sovik suggests that the only human symbol of divine mystery is beauty. "It [beauty] is an experience, not a rational conclusion...priest and artist are found to be companions in every religion."<sup>25</sup> However, he utterly rejects the idea of invoking mysteriousness in an attempt to evoke mystery. The affectation of mystification cannot be a substitute for the genuine mystery of beauty. Thus, for Sovik, "it is beauty, authenticity and hospitality, not a particular style, that are metaphors of the sacred."<sup>26</sup>

The final factor is that which ties the previous three together: authenticity. This is where the elements of continuity and quality come forward to make their statement. This means that the continuity between the sanctuary and other buildings, the sanctuary and its congregation and the sanctuary and its site must be considered. Carl Harkins puts it this way:

The sanctuary is the most important space in the space complex--it should dominate and set the theme for the rest of the spaces that "inhabit" the complex...the feeling that "this is a church" doesn't just limit itself to the sanctuary, but gently "hugs" you whenever you are, even to the exterior of this sanctified space...the exterior must compliment the site, as God intended the works of [humanity] to compliment the nature [God] gave us stewardship over.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Sovik, "Notes on Sacred Space," 363.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 366.

<sup>27</sup>Carl Harkins, "A Design Development Sketchbook for a Church Design

This statement further reinforces how the concept of mystery and sanctification can go hand in hand with intimacy when continuity and integrity become major factors in space development.

The other facet of authenticity is quality. Joseph Sittler speaks out against the lack of quality in our buildings when he talks about our nervous ridiculous buildings that could house insurance companies. Frank Kaemarcik's comments also indicate a frustration with the mediocrity of our church buildings. Perhaps nothing is so indicative of this as the felt and burlap banners that adorn so many churches. Spawned in the sixties and seventies in an attempt to bring warmth and intimacy to our sanctuaries, instead they have become symbols of our worship of money (they are invariably made of felt and burlap because those are cheap materials rather than for anything they evoke), of individuality (they are kept because some well meaning person or group made them) and of modernness (they usually include a pithy saying currently in vogue.) Of course, many church banners are attractive, thoughtful additions to worship services, but many forget the meaning of quality as a means of evoking authenticity. While most people would reject out of hand the idea of plastic flowers on or near the altar, we readily accept fake candle tubes, plastic coverings for altars, chairs, pews and even carpets. In the same way that the architectural community calls for authenticity through quality materials that are not pretending to be something else, so the liturgical arts community calls for the same consideration in all aspects of the worship space.

While intimacy, corporateness, mystery and authenticity each need their place in worship and worship space, there will still be variety from congregation to congregation. This is because each congregation will value one aspect more highly than the others and the design it will develop will reflect that. This is as it should be.

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Competition in Gammel Holte, Denmark," (Senior thesis, California Polytechnic Institute, San Luis Obispo, 1986),p. 19.

If a congregation places a high value on intimacy, it may choose a smaller space incorporating less height and more textured homey fabrics. A congregation that places a higher value on mystery may choose a larger or higher space, a different kind of light play and cooler, smoother surfaces. Thus, while there may be some common trends in worship and the spaces they call forth, each worship space will reflect its congregation's understanding of its relationship with God. Each will be unique.

## CHAPTER 5

### Sacred Spaces: Pulpit, Font and Table

Let me repeat: the details and motifs have nothing to do with the matter. They are like labels, and are not the substance. They have no more to do with the matter than wearing a cross in the lapel has to do with Christian character. At best they are only a statement of intention; the reality lies elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the space we hope will house worship well into the future must have the kind of integrity that does not see details as defining the space, but rather the arrangement of whole space and the arrangement potential of people within those spaces as definition of the nature of the space. While it is not necessary to delineate specifically every aspect of a worship space that engenders the characteristics of intimacy, corporateness, mystery and authenticity, it is appropriate to make some comments on the space in general and on some of the major areas.

James White stresses that the church is basically a people place. He suggests that it requires five liturgical spaces and three or four liturgical centers. There is no need to go beyond this simple outline of the basic needs for Christian worship. These five spaces are: congregational space, since the church is for people; movement space for processions, weddings, funerals baptisms, offerings and the sharing of the Lord's Supper; choir space, which he acknowledges to be a difficult space to deal with; baptismal space, since baptism is an act of the whole community; and sanctuary space, by which he means the space around the altar/table.<sup>2</sup> It is the balance and interplay of these spaces that create the style and the nature of the room. Churches with varying emphases for varying parts of their worship will give greater or lesser attention to the corresponding spaces.

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<sup>1</sup>Sovik, Architecture for Worship, 55.

<sup>2</sup>White, 81.

White does suggest that within the balance of these five spaces are three or four liturgical centers essential to Christian worship: pulpit, font, table and, possibly, chair. Harold Daniels even puts this idea into a simple table form:

<u>Essential Liturgical Actions</u>	<u>Primary Physical Requirements</u>	<u>Enabling Furnishings.</u>
Reading of Scripture and Preaching	Bible	Pulpit
Baptism	Water	Font
Lord's Supper	Bread and Cup	Table <sup>3</sup>

The simplicity of needs for Christian worship is a compelling idea. By stripping away all other unnecessary furnishing, such as lecterns, prayer desks, communion rails and the like, we not only make a statement about the locus of divinity and the economy of means for Christian worship, but we serve to emphasize these three functions rather than detract from them. While lecterns may indicate that the reading of the Word has an importance of its own, they are invariably smaller than the pulpit --emphasizing the clergy/laity heirarchy and possibly evoking a separateness of preaching and reading of the Word. While communion rails provide a place for people to act out their contrition and acceptance of Jesus Christ, they emphasize a privatistic side of Communion rather than the corporate nature of it. If we stick to the essentials, we soon discover that restraint and understatement are the most powerful forms of statement. It is these essential spaces and centers that reveal what is vital in our worship.

Sovik has several good suggestions about the nature of the space in general. First, he suggest the use of the word "centrum" to describe the flexible space in which

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<sup>3</sup>Daniels, 65.

we meet for worship. This is to be a place where the faithful gather for all kinds of spiritual renewal and fellowship. He stresses that "the centrum will be our 'tent,' not our fortress. We gather provisionally. Our life is contingent."<sup>4</sup> This does little to reinforce the idea that worship space is private sanctuary for personal devotions. Rather, it suggests that people are required to make the place complete. And the gathering of this people is the focus of what happens in the liturgy. He suggests that the strongest possible architectural focus for this is not a scheme that has a sense of a stage-audience. Rather, "the liturgical actions together with the liturgical furniture ought to be distributed throughout the room as possible."<sup>5</sup>

This requires generous space that invites movement. The point of entry, the narthex, should be spacious and roomy. It can serve as a gallery for powerful art, as a commons or meeting room. It is not, as Curtis Green emphasizes, a space that serves primarily as a church bulletin board.<sup>6</sup> When we plaster our worship spaces with announcements of meetings and activities, usually in the well-intentioned effort to reach as many people as possible, we show that our programming is more important than our gathered worship, that information is more important than people.

Then, the centrum should also be a generous space, large enough to accommodate the liturgical celebrations of the community. Sovik's illustrations demonstrate that well positioned empty space provides hospitality and intimacy to go with the drama of sweeping space. He does not suggest that row after row of pews achieves the kind of spaciousness he wants. His photographs of the Charles City, Iowa, United Methodist Church have a kind of freshness and openness that blends the mystery of the large space with the intimacy of people-oriented space. And on page 80 the line drawings illustrate how flexible this space can be. An essential part of

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<sup>4</sup>Sovik, Architecture for Worship, 70.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>6</sup>Green, 306.

this flexibility is the use of attractive, interlocking chairs instead of pews. This not only allows for an unlimited number of variations, but also contributes to the domestic scale of the furnishings.

Daniels further elaborates on the concept of spaciousness blended with spread out liturgical centers. The multiple foci of the space encourages movement in liturgy and in the focus of activity. Where previously the clergy or the choir were the center of the activity, and the congregation participated very little, except to read someone else's words or sing a song, the emphasis can shift all around the room.

The congregation can sometimes feel itself to be the center, and sometimes the pulpit, and sometimes the table, and sometimes the choir,...and sometimes the baptismal font. And so we would allow the focus to move to wherever the action of the liturgy naturally takes it. This, it seems to me, could make liturgy and architecture companions in a much more effective way than they usually are.<sup>7</sup>

What, then, about the major elements of pulpit, font and table? How do they fit into the worship space that is going to be intimate, encourage a corporate understanding of the body of Christ, inspire us and lead us to authentic worship and faithful living? Again, each congregation will make an individual statement about their theology as they put the various pieces together in their own unique way. Here are a few of the kinds of things they may wish to think about when they establish these major liturgical centers and the spaces around them.

The pulpit is the space from which the words of the worship come. The words of preaching and the reading of the Word are the primary activities here. Other words in the liturgy, such as prayers of confession, litanies, affirmations of faith, and celebration of the Eucharist may come from this center, but more appropriately come from other places in the worship space. There is little need for a lectern, certainly not simply to achieve balance, as balance can be brought about in more authentic ways. And when a lectern is used for reading the Scripture with the

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<sup>7</sup>Daniels, 64.

preaching from the pulpit, we separate them in a way that is not appropriate if preaching is really to be an illumination of the Scripture. In addition, lecterns are often somewhat less large, high, or ornate than pulpits. Surely this is not intended to suggest that the words of the preacher are more important than the Word of God, but the symbolism may be saying just that. The pulpit is primarily a device to focus attention during these activities and to provide a place that is visually and acoustically sound for the proclamation of the Word.

Considerably more space has been devoted to the issue of the Baptismal font by both Sovik and Daniels. The space for Baptism is too often the neglected liturgical center. Small glass bowls are brought out of cupboards, filled with water and placed on the altar with about as much honor as the rosebuds we sometimes see to indicate a baby born into the community. In general, the sentiment in current literature is for a permanent baptismal font, always filled with water, large enough to be constantly visible. A broad surface of water can give a very pleasant feel to a room, and even a small fountain arrangement can provide warmth of sound and movement. This sort of font, set in its own space and of significant prominence denotes the importance of Baptism. Though we may not celebrate this sacrament with frequency equal to that of the Lord's Supper, the presence of a compelling font reminds us continually of our own Baptism and its significance. Little importance is attached to Baptism when the font is insignificant, and especially when only a small glass dish is used in the rite.

Furthermore, ample space around the Baptismal site encourages congregational movement for the event of Baptism. Some discussion in Daniels is devoted to whether a side location or entrance location is preferable. Both have their merit. A Baptismal area near the entrance, especially in view of entering worshippers becomes a strong symbol of entry into the body of Christ. This encourages entering worshippers to meditate upon their own calling to the body of Christ. A side location can give clearer definition of a special space devoted to the sacrament. These and other considerations,



if thoroughly thought through, make the Baptismal font an important liturgical center rather than an occasional afterthought.

The chancel table is known by many names. Frequently called an altar, in recent times it is more frequently referred to as the Lord's Table. Its purpose is to visually symbolize the presence of Christ in the midst of the faith community. Because it is the table of the Lord's Supper, the sacrament that proclaims the presence of Christ in our midst, its size, shape and decorations should proclaim it as such a symbol.

There is little agreement on the exact nature that this table should have. That it should be sufficiently large as to be visible is clear. But should its scale be human, as a domestic meal table would be or should it be broad and large to signify Christ's accessibility to all? Are flowers appropriate as they would be on a meal table at home or inappropriate because they do not evoke Christ himself? Many traditions discourage anything on the altar which does not represent the presence of Jesus Christ. Most agree that under no circumstances does the Bible belong on the altar. Some suggest that the table have equal prominence with the pulpit and that, when made from the same materials, it can imply a unity of Word in Scripture with the Word in Sacrament.

There is agreement that it must function well as a Communion table, and when not being used as such, should still remind that it is the place where the holy meal is celebrated. Thus, it should be free standing, so that the celebrant can face the congregation while officiating. It must be in the midst of the people. This is not a literal requirement. Rather, the situation of people, pastor and table should feel like a natural gathering around a common table. In this way the sense of community is magnified and the corporate nature of the church is enhanced. All must feel a part of the Eucharistic action, even though some will be performing differing functions in relation to the ritual. Thus, while absolute symmetry is not desirable, there is a

**strong trend in church building today to reclaim the centrality of the Holy Table as a symbol that affirms the community and provides a *sense* of intimacy and holiness.**

## CHAPTER 6

### Congregational Expectations

**You may succeed in building the house of the Lord your God, as he has spoken concerning you. Only may the Lord grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the Lord your God. (1 Chronicles 22: 11-12)**

**What are the expectations of a community planning to build a sanctuary? Are they realistic? How will they affect the planning of the building and its actual outcome?**

**Certainly, every congregation will have some expectations that are unrealistic; either unrealistically good hopes or unrealistically bad fears. In addition, some individuals in a congregation are likely to hold fast to personal expectations, even when they aren't part of the community's expectations. The expectations themselves are neither bad nor good, they are simply the product of human imagination and hope.**

**What is important, even essential, is that the expectations are clearly voiced, shared and, most of all, examined in a community decision making context. It is important for the community to be aware of what expectations they share, which belong only to a few individuals and which of their hopes and fears are probably unrealistic. The need to dispel unrealistic expectations is an important part of the process of deciding whether or not to build. But, beyond that, it is important to have clear ideas about what can be expected from the building process itself, and what are realistic expectations from the end result. This is an important part of the study group, which we will discuss further in this chapter.**

**Most expectations are good ones, and rightly so. But, they can also be a little rose-colored. Let's examine what some of these hopes are, and what about them can be realistic and what about them is not.**

One of the major reasons a congregation builds a new sanctuary is to have greater visibility in the community as a church. A congregation that has been worshipping in a temporary facility especially feels this way. They want to point to their place of worship with pride, knowing that it "looks like a church." In the case of a congregation that is outgrowing their present facility, there is also the desire to point to a place of worship that more accurately reflects who they are; that is, a growing congregation. Most congregations want their place of worship to be readily recognized by the community at large and by passers-by as a place of worship and to be attracted by it.

There is much that is reasonable in this approach. It is certainly true that it is easier for potential members to find a church that is well-located and highly visible. In fact, a difficult to find location can make a church "invisible." Like any institution that wishes to attract new members, the ease of locating the property can have an effect on the numbers of persons who may be attracted to the church. Some church growth experts suggest that high visibility is one of the critical elements of church growth.<sup>1</sup>

What is most unrealistic about this expectation is the misconception that visibility by itself brings members. Certainly, a prominent building may make it easier for prospects to find a congregation and may even attract passers-by. In addition, it is reasonable to expect that community members will be attracted by the building process itself and will come to church just to see the inside of the building they've been watching go up. And some of them may even stay. However, as much as a new building may attract foot-traffic, it will not ensure church growth. Only a growth-oriented program will do that. Only if those who come through the doors find

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<sup>1</sup>Eddie Fox, a United Methodist executive on the Board of Evangelism, in an address to members of the seminar "Offering Christ Today," Anaheim, California, Spring 1986.

something meaningful inside will they stay.

One church found this to be true when they first contemplated their new fellowship hall/gymnasium building project. The church had not grown for some time yet held in trust a substantial amount of money. Many persons wished to build a gymnasium-multi-purpose building with this money. One of the reasons frequently expressed was that this gymnasium would attract the neighborhood youth who would come there to play basketball and this would bring their families and would bring growth to the church. The reasoning was fatally flawed. Let's have a look at why:

First, the church was on a major boulevard in a suburban, residential area. Thus, there was little foot traffic and few "neighborhood kids." Second, there was virtually no youth program in place at the church to begin with and no desire to plan a neighborhood youth outreach program. The current youth group was between the ages of 10 and 15, the youth director part-time and the group consisted of the children of a few, far-flung church families. In addition, the new building was not to be situated near the office facilities, but rather, across the property, so it would be locked most of the time, and therefore inaccessible. Finally, the church was generally very protective of its space and unlikely to open an expensive gymnasium to an unknown group.

So, while the hope of attracting new members through a youth outreach in the building was admirable, it actually had little basis in fact. This is just the sort of dreaming that churches are likely to do. And the church is in the business of encouraging dreams, so we don't like to say "no" to much of anything. But this particular case resulted in a half-finished building that brought an unwieldy debt to a stagnant congregation. Every church must look at how realistic their hopes are. There can be a wonderful time of dreaming at the prospect of building, but it must be in line with what the church truly has as its mission and ministry, not what they think they ought to be. Changes in a church's mission and ministry can surely come

about in any congregation, but a building cannot bring them about, it can only reflect them.

Not every church building project attracts foot-traffic. If the property is located away from major traffic areas, then new construction will not attract a significant number of the curious, because they just won't be exposed to the new creation the way they would if it were happening on a major street corner. So a congregation hoping to attract prospects with a new building needs to make sure that their new building will be exposed to large numbers of people. Congregations who have built on major streets find that they do indeed have some curious passers-by who come in, but not all stay. Curiosity about an architectural interior is not the same as a thirst for eternal truth, and it is the truth seekers who will find what they need and stay, while the curious will just pass through.

Not every congregation can afford to build an architectural marvel that will attract the curious. Many don't even want to build such a thing. As we have already explored, serving worship, not serving art, is the purpose of building a sanctuary. In many cases, this will not produce the kind of thing that brings folks "just to see."

So, while a new building in a highly visible spot can, indeed, bring in the curious, that, in itself will not help a church to grow. However, it can bring the folks who have intended to go to church, and who are now attracted by this new building to act on their inclinations.

While visibility is desirable, and a new building can be part of increased visibility for a congregation, it can also be readily accomplished in some situations through remodeling and/or a change in landscaping. What cannot usually be accomplished through remodeling is acquiring significantly more room. The need for more space is one of the most compelling reasons for a congregation to build a new sanctuary; they simply can no longer worship in the current space without difficulty and discomfort. In the case of such a situation, it seems obvious that the need to build

is there and relatively few questions are asked. Presumably the church is growing or has grown recently and the present space for worship is clearly inadequate. There are, however, some questions that should be asked and the need to build should never, even in this case, be presumed.

One very pertinent question is when did the congregation do its growing? In the recent past? In the distant past? Are they still growing with no end in sight? In some cases, a congregation may experience a sudden spurt of growth which can look deceptively like a trend, but is, in fact, not very long lasting. It is essential for a congregation to evaluate whether it is truly realistic to believe that they will continue to grow at such a rate and pace. There is, in this case, no substitute for reading the materials offered by many institutes and denominational boards and agencies on growth trends in churches. While a faith community does not want to build a sanctuary only to grow right out of it again, it is more often the case that they will have a growth spurt, then plateau for a while, even indefinitely. For any number of reasons--a change in pastors, closure of a nearby church, a new housing development, or even seasonal changes--a church can experience an increase in attendance that will hang on for a while, then taper off. Building too hastily without a careful evaluation of the church's growth history and patterns can easily result in a sanctuary that is too large for the congregation it houses and a debt to match.

In most cases, however, healthy growth in a congregation will, happily, result in the need for more space. The congregation needs to decide, in this case, what they consider a maximum for a worship service and at what point they would prefer, or would require, multiple worship services. It may be that a church can realistically expect to have over 500 persons in worship on Sunday morning, or even over one thousand. But do they really consider it desirable to house all of these people in a single space for a single worship experience? Perhaps. But, many congregations wish to maintain some kind of intimacy and manageability in worship. Building an

enormous house of worship can actually be counter-productive to the congregation that prides itself on intimacy and close-knit relationships congregation-wide. If the church finds itself in the declining stage of its growth cycle sometime in the future, a space that seats 300 will accommodate a single worship service for 150-200 people where it once housed two or more fuller services. Again, flexibility is the key here. Churches do have growth cycles, growing and declining at various rates for various reasons. In order to have maximum flexibility in deciding how much more room a congregation needs, it is important to stress the need for a study group that will cover some of these factors.

For some congregations, satisfied with their current size and in a healthy financial situation, the primary reason for building a sanctuary is to have a more attractive place in which to worship. No matter how attractively camouflaged, a warehouse is still a warehouse and is, for many people, an ultimately unsatisfactory place to worship. In other situations, churches have first built a multi-purpose room in which they now worship which is also converted for other uses including meetings, fellowships, dinners, rummage sales, concerts and stage productions. For some people, this violates the holiness of a place of worship. Granted, a place of worship is only as holy as the intentions of worshippers and God certainly responds to an honest heart rather than stained glass. But, the human condition being what it is, many of us require external stimulus to aid us in our worship. First unit constructions are seldom built with aesthetics in mind. In addition, for many persons, the sense of common history with those who have gone before is an important part of the work of worship and the presence of a sanctuary, or "set aside place," sanctifies and evokes this common history.

Many churches will elect not to build just to make the worship space more attractive and will ultimately reject the need for a building that is used only for holy worship. This is admirable and certainly does not violate any Christian precept.



Many congregations will choose to spend their time and money on mission projects rather than building projects. They are to be commended. But, it is no less Christian to desire a sense of place for one's worship and to use human artistic sensibilities and abilities to create such a space. Most congregations will try to find a middle ground where they feel that they can continue, or even increase their involvement in mission as well as build an inspiring space for worship by making decisions during the planning and building phases that are both aesthetically attractive and fiscally intelligent.

For instance, a congregation may have the financing to build a work of art that seats 1200, which they can easily fill on Sunday morning. They may choose, however, to build a space that seats 500, have three worship services and build their programming around smaller fellowship groups and have a strong mission orientation. There is no reason a space that houses 500 for worship cannot be as beautiful and inspiring as one that seats over a thousand. It can even be awesome and grand, if that is the wish of its builders.

Some churches include in their reasons to build the idea that this will become a project around which a large portion of their congregation can rally and about which they can become excited. This has certainly proven to be the case for many churches that have built recently. However, it is also true that most pastors saw a commensurate decline in interest following the completion of the building. While some few persons who were very intimately involved remained more committed to the life of the church than they had been prior to the building, most dropped back to their pre-building level of involvement.

So, a church must have more to engage persons as part of its life before the building project begins and is separate from it. It cannot rely on the building to create substantive growth, as few of the pastors with whom I talked indicated that growth came from the building per se. What is more often the case is that a church

that is growing requires a new building and the combination of growth programming and a new attractive plant serve to appeal to a broad base of prospective members.

It is essential that a pastor and the congregation keep ever before them the realization that an attractive building does not bring in members. If it did, all those beautiful old sanctuaries of all those "old downtown first" churches would be filled to capacity and the suburban warehouse independent churches would stand desolate. Instead, it is more often the other way around. Something other than a building draws people to the house of God.

There is, however, the issue of prestige, both for a congregation and for a pastor, as a reason to build. Nothing could be more ego-boosting for a pastor than to be a part of a building program, especially a sanctuary building program. All the pastors I interviewed felt that the time they spent involved in a building project was among the most exciting and fulfilling of their ministry. Some liked the concreteness and the visibility of the work in an otherwise vague job. But, nearly all expressed the subtle and not-so-subtle pride of being involved in a "growing concern." Whether or not their church was actually a growing concern, most pastors felt that building a sanctuary certainly gave the impression of such.

One pastor, who came to the church after the decision to build had been made and an architect had been selected, felt that the church wanted to think they were growing and found that a new sanctuary supported this self-image. It was an uphill struggle for him to create the kind of programming that would eventually fill the new building. The congregants present were content to point to their building project with pride; unfortunately it had become a substitute for genuinely growth oriented programming rather than a part of an overall growth strategy.

The desire for prestige is a difficult thing to detect and to name for a pastor or for a congregation. But every church considering building must look itself squarely in the face and evaluate if this is their major reason for building. A pastor must also

set aside the prospective admiration of his or her colleagues and superiors and evaluate what is good for the church, not what is good for the pastor.

While several hopes and dreams are natural, some are unrealistic. It is essential for a congregation to recognize when they have largely unrealistic expectations as their major reason for building. Some of these reasons, for example, pride of place, are perfectly understandable as part of the desire to build, but cannot be the main impetus for it. A congregation should have only the most solid and reasonable of hopes when they enter a building program, or they are certain to face an unexpectedly empty house of worship.

In addition to hopes of the false and true kind are some expectations for trouble. Most congregations planning to build have fears to go with their hopes, which is healthy. Let's look at how realistic some of these fears are.

First, and usually foremost, is the worry about money. Churches seem always to have less to go around than they would like, so there is always argument about where it should best go. In the case of a building, even a church that has clearly decided that a new building would be good stewardship worries about incurring debt. This is a most responsible attitude. There is at least one major reason to worry. In the current economic climate, costs rise at a great rate. A sanctuary that takes a year or more to build, and nearly all of them will, is likely to have some costs that will rise during construction. In addition, unpredictable delays of weather, construction difficulties and bureaucratic red tape can further add to the cost. Thus, a church that enters a project confident of its cost and financing can come to the finish in one and a half to two years, or longer, with more cost overrun than they had dreamed possible. This overrun can often be substantial, especially if errors in planning are found. So, a church can find itself further in debt than it ever intended to be. And, unlike a business, it cannot just raise its cost to the consumer to cover the difference. Allowing a reasonable buffer to incorporate overrun is one way to address this

problem. Certainly, unpredictable things can happen under any circumstances, but a church that expects the unexpected is usually more prepared to work through the obstacles successfully.

Another financial fear is the burden of a new debt. The prospect of a debt can be intimidating to a church that is even a little uncertain about its financial situation and its growth. The worst possible situation would be a church that is counting on a new building to attract new members who will then help to retire the debt on that new building. Only a church with several years of charted growth can rely on increasing membership to cover their new costs. A church can only incur a debt that the current congregation is willing and able to bear.

Churches are also concerned about the mess that they will have around during construction. And they will most certainly have a mess. Things will be less attractive before they are more attractive, and many churches will experience no little amount of inconvenience in the process. One church had to remove the building that had housed the associate pastor and the church offices, as it was sitting on the area for the new sanctuary. They then had to rent a place for the offices nearly half a block away and eventually had to purchase a new parsonage for the associate pastor. This was not only inconvenient for the pastors and staff, but proved to be unwieldy for the congregation as well. It also incurred quite a few unexpected costs of rent, heating, telephone equipment, etc.

Another church had to vacate their current worship space to virtually reconstruct a new one. They then had to occupy their fellowship hall as a worship space during that time. This cut into a great many social events and the church had to find off-site opportunities to provide parish fellowship. Unfortunately, many persons will not make the extra effort to travel further for church social functions. This church did suffer some loss of parish social life that then needed revitalizing at project completion. These kinds of inconveniences can be creatively solved, but they

must be a part of the planning stages, not an afterthought once the church has broken ground.

One of a church's greatest concerns is with the outcome of their planning, labor and money. What if their new sanctuary is built shoddily? What if it is less attractive than they had been led to believe? What if it just doesn't "work" for their worship? The best defense against such a fear is a capable architect with church experience and of good repute and committee that understands what they want and how to express it. An architectural firm that has some experience with sanctuary building can have a better "feel" for how worship works and what kind of space produces what kind of results for worship and worship arts. An architect who has done "lots of churches" or who may specialize in church projects may be less creative and open to rethinking worship space, but someone with no experience may not understand how space translates for the experience of worship. An architect of good name and stability in the area is the greatest assurance of quality. The building committee can examine that person's previous works and can then rely upon their contacts in the field to provide quality labor.

Then, if the Building Committee has done its study in advance, it has a clear vision of what they hope worship will be in this new space. They will know how to express it. In short, they will be in a position to give a responsive creative architect what he or she really needs to create dynamic design possibilities.

Finally, a church has every reason to believe that its pastor will be so involved with the building process that the other work of the church will suffer. Perhaps a certain amount of this is inevitable, but judging from the comments of most pastors it does not need to be debilitating and most of them were able to continue their current programming as well as beginning new, growth-oriented programming during the building process. A careful study of pastoral responsibilities during building by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee or its equivalent can help give guidance to a

pastor. This can help clarify what, exactly, the pastor is expected to do in relation to the building and what is expected in terms of other pastoral leadership. Chapter 10 will discuss what are realistic expectations for a pastor's time and how a church can help the pastor make the best use of her or his time during this particularly intensive phase of a church's life.

Now, what can the leadership of a church do to deal with these exciting dreams, false hopes and fears? I have six suggestions.

1. The entire question of whether to build, the theological study of worship and space and the history of Christian worship should be examined by as large a study group as is willing to participate. This could be a six to eight week class, possibly during the Church School hour, that is led by the pastor. It would examine the history of Christian worship in a broad review, similar to the second chapter of this project. It would explore why building a sanctuary is a theological endeavor and would most especially focus on worship. It should spend time on what worship has been, what it is in other churches of the same denomination, what is shared throughout Christendom and what the dream for worship is among this worshipping community. This would include the largest possible number of people in a theological examination of the larger issues of a sanctuary building. They could work through their preconceived notions about worship and worship space and would have a better understanding of what this new building could be about.

What would be most critical about this study group is that these persons would be the pool of candidates from which a Feasibility Committee and the Building Committee would be formed. Not only would these persons have their recently acquired background for the job, but they would have this theological knowledge in common with one another and with the rest of the congregation. The committee would then have a feel for the needs of the congregation. Such continuity would not eliminate differences between people who have certain preferences, but can put the

decisions about the new sanctuary on solid ground.

2. A Feasibility Study should follow the larger study group which would have as its only purpose the decision whether or not to build. It would, essentially, decide if a new sanctuary is responsible stewardship, is financially possible and if there are good reasons to build. A church may wish for this to be a large group which would then be narrowed to the Building Committee. Others will prefer this to be a smaller, entirely separate group and it may precede building by a number of years. Other churches may wish to assign this task to the Building Committee but may find this requires too much commitment and results in too much power in a small number of persons.

3. Several tools are provided in the final section of this project to guide the discussion of some of the most critical decisions a church must make prior to and during the building process. They may be used as is, or used as a foundation for both the study class and the Feasibility Committee.

4. Since this is all very time consuming, and people want to "get on with it," candid reports in the church newsletter about the study group and, subsequently, the Building Committee, are a critical part of including the entire congregation in the process and in keeping morale up during the preliminary stages of this lengthy endeavor. It will also help the congregation understand that their hopes and fears are being addressed and considered and will help with a more general acceptance of the decisions that are made along the way.

5. Sermons on Christian commitment must be a part of the building process. Only a congregation that fully understands the depth of the waters they are navigating will have a full, rich and rewarding building experience. This is not just an emphasis on financial commitment, but commitment to support of one another through a difficult endeavor.

In addition, there should be presentations from the pulpit that review some of

the theological considerations being studied in the class. The pulpit can be an inspiring teaching tool and many persons are enriched by learning about worship history and space. Although it needn't be a repetition of the study class, effective preaching could include an even broader group of people in the theological task of creating a worship space.

6. Encouraging prayer for the endeavor is a way for everybody to become involved in the process. There can be specific prayer concerns shared from the pulpit or the newsletter. Particular groups in the church can be asked to make prayer commitments. The entire church, to a person, can be enlisted in seeking God's guidance for study and decisions and in supporting those with major responsibilities. It is a reminder that even in the most business-like endeavors, the church is more than a business.



## CHAPTER 7

### Growth in the Building Congregation

**"Thus says the Lord of Hosts: This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord." Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins?" (Haggai 1: 2-4)**

For most congregations, growth is the reason for building. In addition, in most cases, the reason to build a new worship space is because the church is experiencing growth and is over-crowded in their current worship space. If the space the congregation is using is satisfactory, but not aesthetically pleasing, some congregations will choose to remodel rather than build anew.

It is rather common among Protestant churches that when they first establish and begin building their complex they have an overall plan that includes some classroom space, a multi-purpose-type fellowship hall and a sanctuary. Most of these churches first build the fellowship hall, using it for worship, social events and dividing it for classrooms. As the church grows it then builds classroom space and finally, often many years later, it builds a sanctuary.

A church considering building may be at any one of these stages. However, there is no reason to assume that every church, or even most churches will or should follow this pattern. As we have seen, with the changes in worship and in members' needs, flexibility is the greatest asset for a church that is going to build. But how do you know which kind of church you're going to grow?

It may be that the patterns for your church's growth have been clearly established over the last three to five years and you fully expect to continue to grow to be a certain size. Most churches don't think about how big they want to be, only that they want to be bigger than they are. It would be interesting for a church to articulate just what size they think is good for their church: 250, 500, 1500, 5000

members? What they think will definitely influence how they build and each church needs to evaluate its growth situation carefully. Here are three possible scenarios of congregations considering a new sanctuary and some questions each might think about.

#### Grew at One Time But Never Built a Sanctuary

Like the typical pattern above, this church was established about twenty or twenty-five years ago in a new suburban area. It grew to have a moderate number of members, about 400, and has continued at that level, with healthy turnover, but has not grown considerably in numbers for some years. There is no reason to believe the numbers or the enthusiasm for the church's ministry is on the decline. This church has a modest educational facility and a good size fellowship hall that is currently used for worship.

Like most churches, this one should begin by considering carefully whether or not it really needs to build a sanctuary. Some reasons for building might include the congregants' desires to worship in a place that is set aside for only that purpose. They may wish also for a place that is designed with worship in mind. They may have grown tired of moving furniture constantly. They may feel the need to have something that "looks like a church" on their property. These sentiments will vary according to the attractiveness of the current multi-purpose building. In the case of an adequate multi-purpose room, dialogue with a creative architect can often provide for dynamic remodeling at much less cost and trouble than a full-scale building project. In this way, many of the desires for aesthetic appeal and visible identity do not require a totally new building. This church may wish to retain its flexibility, including the nuisance of furniture moving, in order to redirect some portion of their funds to the programming of the church as well as the plant. They may also find that they prefer the flexibility of mobile seating but wish to purchase more comfortable, attractive movable furniture.

#### Grew, But Plateaued Due to Space Shortage

It is at this point that many churches choose to build. They have established themselves and continued to grow at a healthy and steady rate, but are limited in further growth by limited space. This would seem like an ideal time in a church's life to build a new building; and, it quite likely is. Of course, those making decisions need to examine if lack of space is really the cause of the slowing growth trend. Is it possible that this church is simply settling down to the size it is likely to remain? Has the lack of space put a hitch in the growth that will be difficult to overcome? Most of all, what besides the building, is being planned to stimulate growth?

Once some of these questions are addressed, the most significant decision is just how big a space does this worshipping congregation need? Do they want to build for one enormous worship service? Do they want several, more intimate worship services? Again, building for flexibility is the key here. A church that builds with a willingness not to overdo, and is willing to have more than one Sunday morning service is less likely to build themselves a white elephant.

#### Currently Experiencing Rapid Growth

This is the church that most needs to build and is likely to have little time for extensive preliminaries and delays. It is also unlikely to have much capital funding and will probably expect to borrow the money to build with the expectation that all the new members will help pay off the mortgage on the property.

This can be exciting, because this situation is just the sort we all want to be in. Dreams are coming true and hopes are high. Of course, it will be hardest to proceed with sufficient caution and deliberation because everyone is in a hurry to get the needed worship space and is confident of the future growth and concomitant income. It would be well for such a church to ask themselves just how fast are they growing? How much further can they realistically expect to grow? How far do they want to grow? Do they want to have an upper limit on what they believe to be an effective Christian community? Is it possible that the current growth is a kind of "growth

spurt" that may be tempered in the near future? Such a church can easily overbuild. It is easier to expand, or even relocate and build again, than to manage an over-large plant.

In the case of this quickly growing church, it is especially important to thoroughly explore a theology of worship before engaging in the practical, concrete tasks of building. A rapidly growing church may also be undergoing rapid change in the needs and beliefs of the worshippers. It can be difficult to slow down and take a collective breath and do a little thinking, but it could save a great deal of frustration and disappointment.

So far, the discussion has centered around growth. That is because I believe that, with relatively few exceptions, growing churches are the ones most likely to benefit from a building program. Even churches that have stabilized in numbers will probably experience a growth in depth of commitment and programming as they settle into a healthy pattern of turnover.

A church that is planning to build should, generally speaking, consider the building project a part of their overall growth strategy. But while a new building may be a major strategy in a church's growth plan, it is a midway sort of strategy and cannot be expected to create or stimulate growth by itself. A church should already have achieved some measure of success in stimulating growth through outreach and programming before they consider the new building part of it. There are two major questions to be faced here:

1. What other growth strategies are currently being used by the congregation that is planning to build? A church that has made a conscientious effort to develop an overall growth strategy will be able to answer this question readily and will not have to grab at straws to convince themselves that they are trying to grow. Growth should be a congregation-wide emphasis in a church's ministry. Then the church can examine how successful these strategies been so far and whether this success

warrants a new sanctuary.

While growth is not always measured in numbers, either of persons or of dollars, and many churches are focusing their growth goals on the spiritual life of the congregation as a whole and that of its individual members. The church that wants to invest an enormous amount of time and money in a building needs to look at the concrete (no pun intended) factors especially, since that is what the bank will look at when it comes time to secure and repay a loan.

2. What are the church's growth goals? Does this church really want to become a mega-church? Perhaps, yes. Often, though, the needs of the current members are quite different than what would be satisfied by a church very much larger than it is now. Pastors, in particular, need to ask if the vision of significant growth is theirs or their members'. When a church is clear about what kind of mission and ministry it wants to undertake, then it can arrive at a clear decision about whether or not they need a new building, especially a new sanctuary, to meet those needs.

I don't intend to be unduly pessimistic here. Many churches are ready to build a new building. They have many healthy signs of growth, a willingness to face the difficulties of the process, financial stability, and enthusiasm for the project. And, at some point, every congregation makes their decision as a step of faith. There is no amount of caution, care, education or preparedness that can insure against an unhappy outcome. But thorough self-examination can help ensure that this community of faith is as ready as they can be to tackle the spiritual and material chores of building a new sanctuary.

In order to achieve maximum health during and after the building process, it is a good idea for a church to envision as much as they can about what will happen to the various areas of programming, administration and spiritual life during and after the building process. The ongoing health of the congregation can be greatly enhanced

when this advance work has been done so that the programming of the church continues with at least as much vigor as it did before, preferably more.

It is understandable for persons working in program areas to let their attentions be diverted into building tasks. It is also possible that programming will enter into a state of limbo where nearly all planning is done for "when we get the building..." rather than for the current ministry needs. To be sure, planning for when the building is done is important. But planning for what will go on during the building process is more important. Many of the pastors with whom I spoke found that the building process could be very lengthy. It can be up to five years from the feasibility study until actual ground breaking. After groundbreaking, it can be up to two years or even longer before a congregation acquires occupancy. So, to put programming into limbo for two to five years, just because you have a mess in your front yard, will seriously undermine the need for the building in the first place.

Just what can happen in some of the programming areas during building? Here's what several pastors and lay persons shared with me.

#### Education

Generally, little negative effect was felt in the area of education. This was largely due to two factors. First, most of the congregations that were building a substantial size new sanctuary had a staff person who was responsible for Education. This way, the pastor's involvement with the building did not take staff time away from Education. In one or two cases, the clergy staff responsible for Education had some of the senior pastor's responsibilities added to their portfolio of responsibilities. In these cases, there was an increase in lay involvement as well as an increase in the staff pastor's work schedule.

The second factor had to do with congregations who had the wisdom to plan ahead for the building process. Several of the congregations took advantage of the increased visibility due to the construction process to advertise such things as special

seminars and Vacation Church School. In a number of cases, special planning sessions were held to create increased programming during the construction process and to plan again near the end of the construction process for educational uses for the new sanctuary space.

What is important here, and in nearly every other area of programming, was that the churches that experienced growth during the building process were actively strategizing for growth independently of the building. They did everything they could think of to create increased visibility for the Sunday School and other educational programs. They started new classes for children as well as adults, they held special occasion programs such as Parent's Day, Rally Day and Adult Education Day with as much hoopla and vigor as they could. Rather than put the Education programming on hold while things such as space and schedule were at a premium, the more successful programs went ahead with increased vitality and worked through the temporary inconvenience. In some cases, they had to make shift with regard to space but found that the celebrative programming they had planned proved to be a most flexible kind of programming and was invigorating for the Education Department.

#### Missions

Other program areas, such as Evangelism and Missions, did similar things--at least in some cases. Many churches, while not exactly ceasing their programming, were not aggressive in these areas during building. But, some of the stories show what creativity can do.

In one church, which had to vacate its worship space during major remodeling and construction, the Missions Committee decided to take up the slack. The congregation, now worshipping in their social hall, chose not to be continually moving furniture in order to retain the sense of sanctuary to which they had become accustomed. This meant that many of the parish social activities would be seriously curtailed. While the group responsible for fellowship events organized several away-

from-the-church events, it was the Missions committee that really made the difference. They organized work teams and fund raising projects that got nearly every group in the church involved in a shared form of outreach. The result was that before the building process the church gave about \$2000 to missions beyond their conference apportionments and at the conclusion of the building process (about two to three years) they were giving over \$20,000!

Now, it may be that the church had never lived up to its potential in this area, but the illustration still serves to show that the church can renew itself spiritually when faced with a minor hardship. They were able, through lay and pastoral leadership, to focus their energies away from themselves and onto those more needy. This also helped the church reconcile themselves to spending money on the new building, because they knew they were also doing a great deal for those who had less than themselves.

#### Evangelism

Another church found that their Evangelism Committee was renewed and reactivated during the building process. To be sure, this did not happen automatically. An insightful chairperson reminded his committee that they now had a unique opportunity to bring the gospel to persons who had not heard it before. This committee began by strategizing early to re-organize and re-energize their program for calling on visitors. They spent nearly a year getting this new program into place: training the workers, generating enthusiasm for the program and organizing the administration of the program. They then initiated the program a full year before the new building was complete. They found that this caught those who were interested enough to come during the construction process and gave them the time to iron out the bugs in the system; things such as finding out which workers didn't follow through and replacing them, covering the glitches in paper work and making sure the follow through was nearly 100%. They could also get feed back from the visitors they



contacted about the program and make any adjustments that were needed.

Another committee also planned some unique uses for the new building and worked for a year on a drama and concert series that exposed a large section of the community to the church. Because the drama and musical productions were Christian, this meant they exposed the church to potential new members, persons hungry for the Word of God. The beauty of the sanctuary then contributed further to the spread of the Gospel through the performing arts.

The real clue here is that these committees were themselves energized by the prospect of a new building and did something about it. They didn't wait to see what would happen. Of course, nearly all of this programming could have happened even if there had been no new building in sight. These committees were aware of that. They chose not to sit back passively, but to move forward with their most creative programming immediately.

### Worship

What happens to a church's worship attendance during and after a construction project? A general pattern seems to have been similar among several medium sized churches with whom I spoke. All were established churches in their community and were stable or growing slightly at the beginning of construction. Most of them experienced little increase in worship attendance before or during the construction process other than what they had been having all along. In some cases, the attendance was dropping slightly toward the end of the project as people became tired and impatient.

In one church, the attendance continued its downward spiral due to poor preaching, and those who had expected it to go up during construction were surprised and disappointed. Another pastor frankly admitted that his preaching was not up to par during the building and thought there might have been some tapering off of attendance because of that. His Staff-Parish Relations Committee assured him that

following the conclusion of the building they felt his preaching returned to its previous high quality.

Immediately upon occupancy all the churches experienced a dramatic increase in worship attendance comparable only to Christmas and Easter attendances. This continued for two weeks to several months. Then, for the next three to six months, attendance continued to be up by a substantial margin. Some of this was due of course, to the delight and curiosity about the new sanctuary. In addition, nearly every church had planned several special worship and social events in connection with occupancy.

The surprise for most of these churches was they were back to their previous attendance and growth pattern within a year. A majority of pastors observed this pattern and said that colleagues with whom they had spoken found much the same pattern. The churches that had not been experiencing growth in worship attendance, did not begin to do so upon occupancy of their new sanctuary. Moderately and rapidly growing congregations continued their growth at their former rate after the initial up, then down, cycle. Most growing congregations felt that their new sanctuary definitely helped to stimulate further growth.

#### Morale and Membership

None of the pastors, except one, experienced a reversal in their growth trends. I expect that this was because, except for the one, they all felt that a majority of their congregation was in support of the building project. One pastor suggested that a minimum support base would be 75% of all the congregation and that the major part of these be regular worship attenders and regular givers. The only pastor who experienced a decline in worship attendance after building had entered the church after they had broken ground. He found that fully half the church did not support the idea of building and that about 25% of the major givers in the church did not give to the building project. One would conclude that a very broad base of support from all

the congregation is essential to a successful project.

What is the impact of those who don't believe the congregation should have a new building? Different pastors had different ways of approaching the issue, nearly all of which seemed to have satisfactory results. The vehement recommendation that came from nearly everyone I spoke with was that it is essential to have a majority of the congregation in support of the building. For most, this meant that a satisfactory pledge drive would have to be conducted as part of the earliest stages of planning. The results of the building pledge drive were considered to be a good indicator of whether the majority of the congregation was supportive.

In the United Methodist system, there are also several points in the decision making process that require a Charge Conference. Most of the churches had All Church Conferences at these stages, which provided the maximum number of people with information and opportunity to ask questions and to express dissent. In addition, personal, home calls on vocal dissenters helped those persons to feel that their concerns were being heard and they could be gently reminded that they were, if such was the case, in the minority and be invited to find some other way to be involved in the church.

### Finances

Of course, vocal dissent usually goes along with financial dissent, so those who don't want a building are likely not to support it financially. That is why the building fund drive is so important. A couple of the churches had fund drives several years before active phases of the building process, then had another one as they neared ground breaking. This provided them with money to invest during the preliminary stages, thus, there was a significant amount of capital as a financial foundation for the project.

This also helped prepare the members for increased giving. One concern of several pastors and lay persons was whether giving to a building fund would reduce

giving to the general budget. In every case, the building fund drive stressed that the pledge to the building was in addition to one's regular pledge, not instead of it. For the most part, that was how the giving picture went in the majority of congregations. However, it is also certain that some individuals chose to give only to the tangible building project, rather than the vague general budget. Fortunately, most persons understood that simply diverting their money would be of little advantage to the church. By conducting the first building fund drive well in advance of the construction process, the church can gauge just what changes are likely to occur in the giving patterns and compensate for them in the decision making process.

While some of the pastors interviewed began their building projects expecting to pay as they went along, and one did, most of the congregations did borrow some portion of the financing. The guideline used by the majority of the churches was to have raised at least half of the projected cost in pledges, and to borrow no more than half. In the United Methodist church, any borrowing of funds must be approved by both the Charge or Church Conference and by the District Committee on Building and Location and/or the District Superintendent. This can help an inexperienced congregation and/or pastor have some checkpoints where more experienced persons can provide advice about the health of the church's financial situation.

## CHAPTER 8

### Two Critical Elements

The two central players in the drama of the building process are the architect and the Building Committee. Both must be selected with care and study and the two must be able to work with one another. In addition, both the architect and the Building Committee must communicate and relate well with the whole congregation.

#### Selecting an Architect

Before a congregation can select an architect, they need to have some ground rules about how the selection will be made. Only in the case of a very small church can the entire congregation be involved in the interviewing and selecting of the architect. However, even a large church can have a broad base of support for the selection process. If the congregation at large feels good about the selection process and the individuals involved in such a decision, it will increase overall support for the entire project.

So, who will choose the architect? From what pool will the architectural candidates be taken? Who will establish the criteria for selecting the architect? Who will approve the criteria? And, of course, what will those criteria be?

The Building Committee may not be the ones who choose the architect, but they and the architect will need to work together well. The architect should be chosen by a larger group than the Building Committee. It may be unwieldy to have the entire congregation choose the architect, but they are the pool of people from whom a selection committee will be formed. One way to proceed might be to elect a Selection Committee at an all church conference. This may consist of leaders of many different areas of the church, with a wide variety of professions, ages, experience and needs. This Selection Committee would also be drawn from those who have attended the

pastor's study group. If the study group is an appropriate size, it may become the Selection Committee. This is also the group that needs to establish the criteria on which the final decision will be based.

While it is possible to do this quickly and efficiently with a relatively small group nominated by the pastor and elected by an All Church Conference, there may not be a need for such expediency. Most architects have presentations they show to potential clients. These consist of a slide show, or something like it, that gives an indication of the architect's approach to his or her work. It will also provide a look at some of the projects that the architect has finished and some of his or her future projects and designs. This is a time when nearly anyone who is interested should be invited to participate. Those who are making the final decision can then see the reactions and questions of the entire congregation. This will give them an indication of how well the architect responds to questions and deals with the wide variety of people in a congregation, and it will help the greatest number of people be involved in as much of the decision making process as is possible.

The selection of the architect may be the single most important decision to be made in the building process. It can engender a great deal of controversy about who has the most experience, who is the most creative, who has the most flexibility, and so on. The more people who have a sense of what is available the broader the base of support for the final decision. It is also helpful to expose the congregation as often as possible to the complexity of the decisions that are made by the various committees involved in this lengthy process. It might be helpful for a church to have the largest number of persons possible involved in the selection of the architect, with the final approval to be made by the Building Committee (since they will be working most intimately with this person). Or, the church may wish to receive a recommendation from the Selection or Building Committees then act to approve in an All Church Conference.

None of the pastors I interviewed had a church member as architect, and only one had a contractor who was a church member. In most cases, there was no architect in the church, and in the cases where there was, these persons did not wish to be considered potential architects for the job. Obviously, it is nice to have an architect in your church who can tell you who is unreliable or irresponsible in the field. But, beyond this, it is probably best that an architect who is a church member not be hired, because this creates a conflict of interest for the professional and for the church. As a church member, he or she may feel they cannot have complete freedom to assert their opinions as an architect. It is even more likely to be the case that the church will hesitate to be a demanding client asserting high expectations. In particular, it would be a rare church that would survive such a relationship with goodwill intact on both sides. It would be even less desirable for the church-member architect to work, or consult free of charge. When the church receives something free of charge, which it does often, it cannot in any way criticize this free gift. And a church that is building a new sanctuary needs complete freedom to discuss their desires and frustrations with their architect.

So, beyond choosing someone who is not a member of the church, or otherwise related to a member of the church, what are the criteria from which a selection will be made? The group selecting the architect will have to determine what their church's needs are. However, it would be well for this Selection Committee to make a list of criteria, with the individual criteria weighted by importance. They can work from this clearly articulated list to make a decision and to which they may refer when explaining their recommendations to the congregation. They may begin this process by answering some of the following questions:

1. How much church building experience do we want our architect to have? Do we want someone who does churches almost exclusively, but may not be as open-minded as we would like? Or do we want someone with very little church

experience, who may be more flexible, but may not understand some of the unique needs of a church? Some churches elect to hire an architect who has a lot of church experience and many hire the same one or two persons noted within a denomination. Some of the churches opted not to hire these persons because they do not want to struggle against the architect's preconceived notions about what their church should look like, and did not want to look like all the other churches of their denomination in their area. However, the popular church architects in a given area can be a known factor. A committee can look at their work, find out what their reputation is, what their failings are and how happy their clients are after some years of living and worshipping in the building this architect designed for them.

2. Are we looking for a person of faith to do this job? Will a religious person have a better understanding of how worship is art and how space works with people to create worship art?

3. How important is the architect's reputation for bringing a project in on budget? There is great variety in how well architectural firms do in this area. If a church is prepared to do their own overrun calculating, then this will be less important. But a church that is less flexible in the amount of money it has to spend should be careful to find an architect who has a reputation for coming in near budget. In this case, it is helpful to have several recent clients with whom to talk.

4. Do we want a local firm? Sometimes a local architect, especially in a somewhat isolated area, has a better grasp of your needs and a more individual touch than someone from a large urban metropolis. However, a large firm usually has more to offer in the way of experts, connections and previous experience.

5. How involved do we expect our architect to be? Do we want her or him to simply design, or do we want someone who will design the building and then consult during the construction process? Do we want someone who will be intimately involved all the way through to occupancy? One recurring complaint among pastors



interviewed was of architects who were very hard to find during the construction phase.

6. How "avant-garde" do we want an architect to be? Do we want someone whose every project is markedly different from the previous one, who creates highly individual spaces by listening carefully to the specific needs of the client? Or would we prefer someone who has an identifiable style, or a trademark? Do we want someone who does variations on a general theme, constantly seeking to stretch and refine a basic concept? How predictable do we want the outcome to be?

7. Do we want to ask several architects to submit preliminary design ideas? Or do we want to select an architect first and then ask her or him to submit several of their ideas?

8. What can we afford to pay this architect? Will we want to negotiate for a fixed fee or a percentage figure that may increase as costs go up during construction?

9. What are their professional credentials?

10. How much weight will the "slickness" of the presentation have? Will we have any other interviews besides the presentation?

11. Do we want someone with whom our pastor or others in our church have worked before? How much weight will this have? Some churches almost automatically choose the architect their pastor worked with in a previous building project. This can be expedient but may emphasize the bond between the pastor and the architect and create a more autocratic situation than the church wishes.

12. How important is it that this architect brings the project in on time? Are we clearly aware that delays in time invariably result in increased costs?

13. How well does this architect work with a committee? How important is this? Is our committee strong enough to hold its own against a forceful and creative personality? Or are we uncertain enough about our experience that we would prefer an architect who works more gently with our committee?

14. Do we expect this architect to work with volunteer labor in addition to the Building Committee?

15. How theological do we want our architect to be? Many pastors expressed their greatest appreciation for an architect who could think theologically and help the Building Committee to do that part of their job effectively. Others would prefer that the architect did not interfere in the theological decision making.

16. Is artistic ability and creativity primary for us? Enough so that we would be willing to work with a "prima donna"?

17. How important are communication skills and interpretation of design ideas to the Building Committee and the congregation?

18. How many other projects do we want this architect involved in? Are we willing to be a smaller project in a firm that has several large projects going?

Naturally, no architect will be perfect for your church. So, it is critical to decide what the most important criteria are and what minimum standards are for the remaining criteria. Not that a church should expect to be content with someone less than satisfactory; but it is unlikely that a church can find a person or a firm that has all the most wonderful characteristics and no negative ones. It is also important to know what you would consider an "elimination" criteria; i.e., a condition or characteristic of an architect or architectural firm that would eliminate it from your consideration. One must be very careful about this, as many less than desirable characteristics can be endured, even neutralized. But there may be one or two things with which a church simply doesn't want to deal, and the Selection Committee should be aware of what these are.

Now that the criteria have been established, how do you go about actually selecting an architect? There are several procedures that are helpful. First, one must gather a list of names. These can be obtained from regional denominational boards and agencies, from other nearby churches that have recently built a sanctuary, from the

area architectural association, from acquaintances in the church or from the pastor's previous experiences.

Next, before inviting any of these persons to give presentations, the selection committee should check their credentials and make initial inquiries about their reputations. Any who are obviously not reliable or who have been legally questionable can be eliminated right off the top.

At this point, the Selection Committee may want to decide how many presentations they wish to sit through and invite that number of persons to offer presentations to them. If the candidates are few and can be organized to present within several weeks, it can be an advantage to the selection committee to open the presentations to the church at large. This will afford them the additional opportunity to see the congregation's reactions to the designs and to the persons.

At the same time, the Selection Committee should be physically visiting as many previous projects as they can of the individuals they consider to be potential employees. This will help the committee get a feel for how a drawing or photograph translates into three dimensions. There is nothing like a well diversified "church tour" to open a committee's thinking about what their new worship space can look like.

During this time, several individuals should also be contacting previous clients. These are the people who can tell you whether your potential choice is a prima donna, whether her buildings come in on time, and on budget, or whether his buildings are notorious for leaky roofs or poorly planned ventilation. They can tell you how well a person works with a committee and whether or not they have good follow through. In general, only another client can tell you how satisfactorily a given architect fulfilled his or her promises, both spoken and unspoken.

This should narrow the field considerably. Much discussion will be required to assimilate all of the information that has been collected. At this point the Selection

Committee will want to have an interview with the one or two finalists in their selection process. This will not only further confirm how well the person can work with a committee and respond to its needs and desires, but will allow a committee to establish terms of a contract and a basis for fees.

Once an architect has been chosen, it must be announced to the congregation. This should be done through every avenue possible, such as the newsletter, the Sunday bulletin and from the pulpit. In addition, a church may wish to use this as an opportunity for further publicity by submitting a news release to the local papers. This will signal to the community that the church is embarking on an exciting project quite sometime before the public will see physical changes in the property.

Three pastors explained their choice of architects in the following ways:

One church selected architect A, a well known designer of churches in their denomination and area. They knew his reputation for leaky roofs and other design flaws, and that his projects frequently came in way over budget. But they felt that their other choice, architect B, was too conventional in his approach and would not provide them with the original design which they sought. They felt that architect B's churches "all looked the same."

Another church, also narrowing their field to the popular architects A and B, selected B. They felt that A's design flaws and budget problems were difficulties they couldn't tolerate. They were unaware that B had created several similar looking sanctuaries in their region, but were very satisfied with the design he did for them. Another pastor who had also chosen architect B for several projects admitted that he was somewhat less creative than others, but worked well with church committees and had a predictable, affordable result and had good follow-through.

A third church made a conscious choice to seek out someone besides the ever-popular A and B. They selected architect C, someone who was younger, but still highly experienced. They cited her openness to hearing their dreams and concerns

and her fresh approach to the sanctuary as primary reasons for hiring her over more established architects. They felt that they did not want tried and true solutions to their problems, but wanted to break fresh ground with their project.

Each of these churches was happy with the choice they made. Each had a successful experience with their architects, resolved difficulties to the satisfaction of the church and the architect and most would recommend their architect to anyone who would ask. Every church will need to establish what is most important to them, so they, too, will have a satisfying design in which to worship.

#### Forming a Building Committee

The other critical player in this project is the Building Committee. The question of who belongs on the Building Committee is an important and delicate one. There are many persons, including large donors, persons with building and contracting experience, and long-time or charter members who believe that they have an inalienable right to be on the Building Committee. Let's try to sort out the process and particulars of Building Committees.

At what point does a congregation need to establish a Building Committee and over what will it have authority? One possible order of events would be to first form the large study group that meets for several weeks and is led by the pastor. At the conclusion of this, a group of seven to nine persons could form a feasibility study group that would meet for two to six months to explore whether or not this congregation has a need to build, what kind of building they might erect and what an estimated cost might be. This would then be presented to an All Church Conference which would vote to build or not. At this point there needs to be an initial finance campaign and the process for selecting an architect can begin. These tasks could be done by a Building Committee, but do not necessarily need to be. However, at about the time of the final selection of the architect by a Selection Committee the Building Committee needs to form.

The kind of person who makes a good Building Committee member is a person of commitment and stamina. Building Committees will frequently be in existence for three to six years or more, depending on the complexity of the project. At some points in the process, for instance the plan development stage, the committee may meet as often as weekly. In any event, it will meet once or twice a month throughout its tenure. The persons elected to this committee must be able to commit a very significant amount of time. It will be essential for members of the committee to attend all the meetings, vacations notwithstanding. Persons who will have regular commitments elsewhere will not make good Building Committee members.

These persons must also be in for the long haul. They must have the sort of character that is determined to finish a job once it is begun. Because the process is lengthy, and sometimes tedious, people who "burn out" quickly would find this sort of job unrewarding.

They must be the sort of people who are independent thinkers, who can debate and argue healthily with an eye to consensus resolution. An independent person is unlikely to be swayed by the pastor's opinion, the architect's view or the reasoning of a more forceful committee member. This does not mean that every member of the committee has a forceful personality, only that they think things through for themselves as well as engage in collective decision making. These independent thinkers will not be led along by the preferences of a much beloved pastor and they will understand that their job is to find a collective solution to every problem put before them.

Yes, the job is a problem solving one. Nearly every task facing a building committee will involve examining a problem, surfacing the maximum number of solutions and then sorting through them to find the best solution for the situation. These people must be realists without being pessimists. And they must understand how to be a part of a team and not want to quit the committee every time a decision is

made that is not in strict accordance with their wishes.

That is what these folks must have in common. What they should not have in common is profession, age, experience with building projects, longevity in this church or preconceived ideas about what a church "looks like." In a presentation to a group of clergy, Pasadena architect Culver Heaton, who has done a significant number of churches in Southern California, suggested that nine is a good number for a Building Committee. He also stressed that it is not desirable to load the committee with builders and contractors. The committee may feel more secure with one of these persons, but he suggested that a variety that reflects the make up of the congregation will produce more satisfactory results.

He stressed that the committee's job is not technical but that they are there to see to it that the professionals produce the kind of worship space they want. He suggests that teachers, homemakers, engineers, machinists, dentists, doctors, salespeople, librarians, childcare specialists all make good building committee members. He was most emphatic that the committee represent a cross-section of the congregation.

Since problem solving is the on-going task of this committee, how they resolve inevitable and constant differences of opinion will influence how effectively they make decisions. Of course, the committee will elect a chair, convener or other coordinating official. They could then proceed according to the traditional methods of Robert's Rules of Order, offering motions for action items and then voting on them. However, this method has two distinct disadvantages. First, it seldom solves a problem adequately, it simply votes down minority opinions. In the case of problems being solved for the building decisions, the more dissenting opinions that are offered the more adequately a problem will be solved. So rather than discouraging the "but, what about..." kinds of questions, the decision making methods should encourage them. That will help the Building Committee make as few mistakes as possible.

Second, the Building Committee is likely to have a small number of people, less than a dozen, and to follow strict rules of order will stifle discussion rather than encourage it. It is also likely to create unnecessary "camps" among the small group, who were chosen for their ability to think, not because they are special friends. Yet, the committee will need to make some official decisions and they will need to have a way of reporting official recommendations to the Charge/Church Conference.

One way to work through the multitude of problem-solving tasks facing a building committee would be to use a consensus style of decision making. This might appear as the chairperson convening the meeting and setting forth the amount of time they have and the various items for their consideration. The committee can then address each potential decision by first discussing what exactly the problem is, surfacing as many possible solutions as they can with no evaluation. They can then discuss each possible solution in as much depth as they like, sorting through all possible solutions until the whole group agrees that they have found what appears to be the best solution.

During this process the chair can continually point out which answers address the problem directly and which are simply matters of personal taste and preference. If this is done consistently as part of the discussion rather than in an attempt to convince one or two persons to join the crowd, most folks will eventually learn which of their opinions to let go of as being matters of personal preference and when to hang in there because they think a mistake is being made that may have unpleasant consequences.

The consensus process can be somewhat more lengthy than a parliamentary procedure, but it may result in fewer regrets for the committee. It is also essential that a committee that takes this approach thoroughly explores how it will work with the chair, the pastor and the architect in a multi-level relationship.

The relationship between the architect and the committee must, of course, be



one of partnership. While the architect is the expert, the church is the employer. Yet, the two want the same end product: a worship space that has artistic integrity and meets the desires and needs of the congregation. At this point, it is essential for the architect to understand that, unlike secular buildings and unlike art in general, the piece of art that is a worship space cannot be considered a success on the basis of its aesthetic appeal alone or even from the degree of satisfaction it affords the artist. If it does not work as a satisfying place of worship for the people who will enter it, it does not succeed. Neither does this mean that the architect should abandon all hope of creativity and simply produce the "churchiest" looking thing she can. The job of the building committee is to work on behalf of the church with the architect to coordinate these two objectives.

Obviously, the architect and the building committee must be able to communicate. An architect who is willing to attend many committee meetings will be essential, especially during the planning stages.

But the architect - Building Committee relationship is not the only one that must work smoothly. The Building Committee cannot let itself be so taken with its "inside knowledge" of the goings on that it ceases to be representative of the congregation and accountable to it. The Building Committee must do everything in its power to keep communication open between the Committee and the congregation. Regular reports in church newsletters, occasional special letters and announcements from the pulpit are all helpful ways for the Committee and the congregation to communicate. A contact person that will receive any and all questions from any member that wishes to write or call can also be a helpful way to keep the congregation to Committee lines of communication open.

Finally, the Building Committee will need to have occasional All Church Conferences to receive the church's approval on a variety of things. This brings up the question of just how much authority should the Building Committee have. In the

United Methodist church there are some very clear limitations. While the Committee might make recommendations about how much money to borrow they do not have the authority to borrow it. They must gain the approval of both the Charge Conference and the District Committee on Building and Location to do so. There may be other times when the Building Committee wishes to gain the approval of the entire congregation. They may wish to submit their final choice of plans, as honed and perfected by the committee, for congregational approval. They may wish to have a whole other group in the congregation do the fund raising for the building.

Each committee will have to judge for itself how much of the work must be streamlined and how much must be shared. Naturally, the more consensus on the part of the congregation, the more widespread the satisfaction with the final product. However, it is not possible for everyone to agree on even a majority of detailed decisions. So the Building Committee must keep its eyes and ears open and attempt to be responsive to the majority of the congregation and responsible for a high quality product of authenticity and integrity.

## CHAPTER 9

### Administration, Finance and Legalities

Establishing priorities for the pastor and other professional staff can be a difficult and awkward part of the business of building. There are individuals in churches who are seldom in need of much excuse to be unhappy with their pastoral staff and the many expectations and emotions revolving around a building can be cause for increased dissatisfaction. What are reasonable expectations for the church and the pastor to have of the pastor's time? In addition, what will the responsibilities of other staff be? Will there be a need for additional staff? Finally, what is the most effective style of leadership for a pastor leading a building congregation?

It can be difficult to determine an appropriate schedule for a pastor involved with a building congregation. It is possible for a pastor to spend either too much or too little time with the building tasks. It is natural to view the new building and its many tasks as being the most urgent job on the list. Most days, the building will have a very high priority because it is important to move ahead as quickly as possible on most tasks involved with the building. The paperwork required for financing, the bills that need approving to make purchase orders, daily office problem solving with creditors and contractors, and dealing with the bureaucratic red tape of City (or County) staffs can easily take a very high place on a pastor's list of daily priorities.

In addition, if there are any church members involved on a daily basis as volunteer labor or involved in daily decision making, the pastor will want to maintain constant contact with those persons. Furthermore, because the pastor is on site, it is easy to assign to him or her the myriad small details that are more easily done from the church office by the pastor or the office staff. With all of these additional responsibilities, it is easy for a pastor to become absorbed in the building. Also, the

building provides a pastor with a very tangible project that is new and exciting in a job that can become mundane and vague.

A pastor can become overinvolved with a building. The temptation to tend to all sorts of details, to supervise the daily goings on, to assume the many small daily chores and to micro-manage can be very strong indeed. Also, many churches are willing to let their pastor do this, because, as a church they also have focused on the building as the most important thing happening in their midst and have put most of their ministry on "hold" during the building process. It takes a far sighted pastor to lead a church into forward thinking, growth oriented programming, and to also keep her or his own perspective about the real work of the church during this time.

Several pastors and lay members interviewed said that they felt that the quality of preaching had dropped significantly during the year when the construction was at its most intensive. In the congregations where this was not so, the pastors saw themselves as senior administrators rather than middle managers and were able to keep in touch with the building goings on, participate in the decision making and stay on top of progress without becoming mired in the day to day tasks that seemed to have taken over the days of some other pastors.

There was quite a difference of opinion among the pastors interviewed about how intimately involved they needed to be. One pastor felt that he could make a ten or fifteen minute morning visit to the building site to see and hear the latest, could suggest which church or building committee members could deal with which problems and could then return to his daily work load without too much interruption. He said it ultimately added about an hour a day to his work day, but did not interfere significantly with his other pastoral duties. He did not personally begin any new programming, but was able to encourage his committees and staff to do so. This pastor enjoyed the building process and both he and his congregation felt good about his balanced leadership during this time.

On the other hand, several pastors found that some unusual situations arose that required a significant amount of extra time at some point during the building process. In one case, the church had to pursue litigation because of failure to complete on the part of the contractor. This is surely an unusual case. During the remainder of the building project, however, this pastor found that she could spend a good amount of time on her preaching and calling.

What can a church do when their pastor is so enchanted with the building that they feel they are no longer receiving adequate pastoral leadership? To start with, many churches think that it is inevitable that their pastor will become so occupied with the building that they must expect a reduction in pastoral care and leadership. This attitude can harm the quality of worship and programming at a time when both of these things should be at their most appealing in order to retain the people the new building attracts. So, a church must plan in advance to have responsible, available, capable people ready to assume the various responsibilities of the building project. They must also remember that the more volunteer church labor they wish to use, or if they wish to have a project manager rather than a contractor do the job, they will need even more co-ordination of the pastor and the church office will have a significantly increased amount of work.

Several pastors felt that "do-it-yourself" church building should be limited to simple buildings for smaller churches. Otherwise, they felt it was inevitable that the pastor would become so involved with the building that other pastoral work would suffer. Some of these pastors were quite critical of their colleagues who, in their view, enjoyed the building work to the damage of the church's ministry.

The other side of the issue is when the pastor plays too small a role in the building process. This can happen when a pastor does not support the church's choice to build or when he or she is unhappy at the church they serve and the building project is one more chore in a job where they are fundamentally dissatisfied. It can

also be that a pastor depends too heavily on the lay persons out of uncertainty about his or her experience with buildings. Usually, a little prodding by a Pastor-Parish Relations Committee will help a pastor realize that the congregation would like more leadership in this area. Some pastors do not wish to be involved in a building project, either because they don't feel comfortable with the job tasks, or because they feel the church is making a mistake in building. In this case, the pastor and church should part ways while there is goodwill on both sides.

How much time a pastor will spend involved with the specific tasks of the construction itself will depend on how much authority he or she feels they need to have in the process. In most churches, the pastor feels responsible for the success or failure of any endeavor, and the congregation usually assigns their pastor this kind of responsibility in spoken and unspoken ways. So, it's best to have things spoken, and written, whenever possible so that everyone is clear from the outset.

In some cases, the congregation and the pastor will want the pastor to have a great deal of day to day authority, approving bills, dealing with contractors and subcontractors, making contact with the architect, supervising the day to day goings on, organizing volunteer labor, and so on. In other cases, the church will prefer that the chairperson and members of the Building Committee take on as many of these responsibilities as possible leaving the pastor to work with the programming areas of the church, to keep up the caliber of worship and preaching and to tend to the pastoral care of the members. Of course, it is essential for the pastor and the members of the Pastor-Parish relations committee to clearly articulate with one another what their expectations are about the balance of the pastor's time. It is unlikely that the pastor will spend 100% or 0% of his or her time on the building, but there will be a matter of weight and priorities. And, if the pastor is to have day to day authority over many aspects of the building, the time involvement will increase substantially. A church that assigns this responsibility to its pastor must recognize the impact on the

rest of the church's ministry, since no pastor can simply add building tasks to her or his current work load.

The building process will also affect other professional and volunteer staff of the church. First, if the church is large enough to have other clergy staff, it is likely that the senior pastor will be the one most involved with the building process from start to finish. It will likely be the senior pastor who will run the study class, will be involved in selecting the architect and will interact heavily with the Building Committee. In the case of co-pastors, usually one of the pastors will be more involved with the building and the other pastor will assume more of the preaching or other responsibilities. In any case, it is almost a certainty that when one pastor on a pastoral team becomes involved in a project as large, involved and lengthy as a new building, the other clergy staff will have to rearrange their job portfolios accordingly.

This may vary from church to church, but it helps if this is a team decision. For instance, in the case of a very large church with five or six full time clergy staff, the church may hire a contractor who needs relatively cursory involvement from the senior pastor. In this case the senior pastor would provide a kind of executive leadership for the Building Committee. If the church also has a full time church administrator, clergy or lay, there may be little diversion of the senior pastor's responsibilities to the other clergy on the staff. On the other hand, in a medium size church where there may be only two full time clergy staff, and the church chooses a more volunteer oriented process for building, the senior pastor is likely to give a significant percentage of his or her time to the building process. In such a case there are several areas of responsibility that may fall to other clergy staff. Perhaps the senior pastor will wish to share more of the preaching and worship planning, or relinquish more of the calling. It may be that the majority of the programming for the church will fall to the other clergy staff. All of this should be clearly stated in the Pastor-Parish Relations committee so that the church, as well as the clergy staff,

understand what is happening. It is important for a church to know that when they increase the work load of their senior pastor, they also increase the work load of the other clergy and lay staff whether or not they know it.

In addition, there are non-pastoral areas of responsibility to consider. For example, does the church need to have additional persons involved with finance? Almost certainly a church needs at least one person whose sole responsibility is to do the bookkeeping and check writing for building related areas. If the church currently employs a half-time financial staff person, bookkeeper or accountant, they may wish to contract for additional hours for a year or two during the building process. Or, they may wish to recruit a capable volunteer from the congregation. If the church currently has a volunteer bookkeeper/treasurer, it will probably be necessary to have an additional person. In addition, if there is a separate person who records the member giving there will be additional work with the one or two fund drives associated with the building and there may be a need for someone to assist the regular financial secretary. In any case, it would be an unusual situation where the current financial staff of a church, paid or volunteer, could take on the additional responsibilities involved in financing and constructing a building without a great deal of strain.

The secretarial staff, also, will almost certainly have a lot more work. From the initial mailings associated with building fund drives, through the announcements for extra meetings, additional correspondence, paperwork surrounding the bidding for architectural and contractual services, on through the increased foot and phone traffic, the mailings providing the congregation with information and the increasing programming; a secretary, even a very good one, is quickly swamped. In addition, a busy pastor often makes for a very busy secretary, although most pastors don't recognize this fact very readily.

One secretary with whom I spoke said that for two or three years she felt



continually swamped. She knew that the pastor was overworked because of the building, but she also knew that the congregation recognized that and rewarded him for it. She felt that the pastor, and as a result the congregation, didn't realize how much of his extra work actually landed on her desk.

In another church, the office staff organized together to increase the number of volunteers in the office from early in the building phases. This way, by the time things really became overwhelming there were any number of persons who could staff the phones and operate as knowledgeable receptionists on a regular basis ( i.e. once a week), there were several teams of persons who could fold, sort and bulk mail any number of mailings, could file the increasing amount of paperwork and who could keep up with the increase in office work surrounding the new members and visitors resulting from the new building. This left the secretary with a more managerial position, for which she was not compensated, but which did make the increased office workload tolerable.

One pastor was fortunate enough to have a retired executive secretary who would spend one full day of each week taking dictation, typing letters and filing in order that he could keep up with the additional correspondence involved with the building project. This came in especially handy when there was some difficulty with the city about street lighting and the pastor was required to appear with an attorney before the city council. The increase in correspondence was significant and this volunteer secretary contributed two days a week to help handle it.

Many churches have people who are willing to provide this kind of volunteer assistance and finding them is critical to the smooth running of the project. In the case of a church that does not have these advantages, they may wish to seriously consider hiring at least one additional secretarial staff as part of the cost of building a new sanctuary. Now, if the contractor includes in his or her fee the cost of their firm's secretarial staff, there may not be quite as much additional work load for the

church's office staff. But many churches have a project manager, rather than a contractor, and in such a case the project manager usually does not have secretarial staff and the administrative workload of the church office will increase dramatically.

Of all the "war stories" told by clergy, the stories of the financial and legal scrapes are the ones that are told with the most relish. Even when things don't resolve themselves to the satisfaction of the pastor or the church, it is the financial and legal troubles that seem to carry the most weight. Of course, the list of things that can go wrong in the complex and lengthy building process is a long one indeed. We cannot list them all here. But, by sharing a few stories from pastors who have done some building, we can get an idea of the kinds of things that can go wrong. Then a pastor can be on the lookout for potential trouble. In some ways, while one hopes for the best in every project, one must look for the worst in order to prevent it.

In the realm of finances perhaps the most ominous fear of most pastors and their congregations is that somehow, the money will run out. This happened to two churches, for entirely different reasons.

The first church was a new church in a growing area. It was in an outlying area of a major metropolis and was experiencing tremendous growth in housing projects for young families who wished to own homes and were willing to commute some distance to work to do so. Thus, affordable housing was springing up all over this little community. The church had begun in someone's house and had finally requested a full-time pastor. During their initial five years they met in a community building. Before long, they found they needed to acquire more space to achieve a sense of stability in the community and to have more flexible use of the space. As is the case in many churches, a long time church member volunteered to assume the financial tasks related to the building. However, the church did not bond him. This seems reasonable enough. Unfortunately, "long-time member" in this church meant only two or three years. In addition, the community was a somewhat transient one.

This treasurer soon disappeared with a significant portion of the church's money.

No one was sure why or how this happened. But it was a near disaster for the building project. Fortunately, the regional office was able to assist the church with sufficient funds to complete their modest building. In addition, the church continued to grow at a fairly rapid rate and the larger congregation was able to raise enough money to complete the building without cutting corners and with very little delay. What surprised them was that they had never thought there would be a need to bond a church member. In churches, where sensibilities run high, it can be quite awkward to imply mistrust in a person. Of course, a church that hires a contractor will make sure that she or he is bonded, but they are unwilling to take such steps in the case of their own members who will be handling money. However awkward and uncomfortable it may be, if a church announces well in advance that in their search for additional volunteers to handle the building treasury they will expect all volunteers to be bonded, it will not seem like mistrust of an individual, but will look like what it is, a sensible precaution.

Another church that ran up against money troubles did so because they didn't have the full support of the congregation before they began the building. This congregation was quite divided about the necessity for their new building and a number of the major givers were not in support of it. A small group of persons in control of two or three committees decided that a new building would be a good way to spend their several hundred thousand dollar capital fund that had come from the sale of other properties and some large bequests.

They were surprised to find, as they got well into the planning phase, that their cash foundation would cover only about half of what they wanted to build. So, naturally, they had a fund drive to collect the remainder. But, because they had not ensured the support of the majority of the congregation, and had in fact burned a couple of bridges along the way, they had disappointing and inadequate results from

their building fund drive.

At this point, the Building Committee had become something of an entity unto itself, although they had a great deal of support in the Administrative Council. They then decided that they would have to freeze all of the general budget spending and all of the other assets to complete the building. This caused further resentment. They still didn't have enough money and so the building stood mid-construction for nearly six months while they arranged other loans and financing. The building is now finished and is being used by the congregation in a limited way, since several of the rooms are not yet finished as they had originally planned. The bulk of their mortgage is covered by outside groups who rent space in the building. In this case, several individuals, in spite of pastoral leadership that tried to prevent it, insisted on going ahead with a project which did not have enough support.

In the case of two other churches, the major difficulties had to do with legal problems. While delays revolving around these problems can certainly cost money, and the problems themselves may require considerable outlay, their fundamental problem is not one of money, but of the time and worry involved.

One church found itself in the miserable predicament of having to go to court to sue a church member who was acting as their contractor. The pastor remembers feeling uncertain when she arrived at the church to find this person already hired. Furthermore, the church had hired him with the prior knowledge that he had had some difficulty in previous jobs. The pastor says that even if he had been a reliable person, she would have been uncomfortable hiring a church member for a job as sensitive as contractor for a sanctuary costing over one million dollars. This member had gotten in the habit of taking on a new contracting job, collecting some of his fees for the new job and using that money to pay off the sub-contractors from the previous job. He had to do this because he consistently underbid the job and then when it cost more than he had bid, he ran short of funds. This practice caught up with him on the

church job, and he found that the church was a lenient client. Ultimately, the church had to go to court to sue him for failure to perform, then had to hire another contractor, at considerably more expense than they had anticipated. Of course, the gentleman no longer attends the church and has withdrawn his membership.

The church made two major errors. First, it is almost never a good idea to hire a church member for a job that is likely to be so sensitive. Second, the church hired this man because his bid was so much lower than other bidders. When a contractor is substantially lower than all other bidders, it is well to examine his or her past performances. Churches very naturally desire to do things as inexpensively as possible. In this case the desire to be good stewards of the monies given them produced a poor judgement.

The second case was a church that had difficulty in its negotiations with the City Planning Staff. Many churches find that City (or County) Planning Staffs are the ones who hold the key to permits and inspections. One bitter pastor was even heard to remark facetiously that the church should budget for what would amount to bribes of city officials. None of the pastors whom I interviewed at length mentioned this kind of behavior. However, one church, when it received the conditions for its building permit, found that one of those conditions included undergrounding all of the telephone cables on the side of their property facing a major boulevard. At the time, the church understood that the electric company for their area had been collecting fees to underground most major streets in the city. The City Council had the street adjacent to the church's property third or fourth on their list of directions to the electric company. Therefore, at the time the condition was placed, the church had every assurance, from the City Planning Staff and the City Council that the electric company would have completed this condition long before the church would be ready for its final inspection. The undergrounding was estimated to cost \$150,000.00.

Bureaucracy being what it is, that is, slow, the City Council had not instructed

the electric company to complete that section of the undergrounding nearly two years later when the church was ready to seek its permit to occupy. This meant that the church had to hire the services of a lawyer, and that the pastor had to make several appearances before the City Planning Staff and the City Council in the long process of requesting delays, extensions and finally, release from the condition. This pastor, well established in the community and well respected, was able to visit each of the City Council Staff personally. The church appeared en masse to each of the pastor's appearances before the City Council. They also had the good fortune to have their Council hearing televised in the week before City Council elections. All of this ultimately resulted in the City Council releasing the church from the condition, with the recognition that the church had, in fact, been led to believe that they would not have to pay for the undergrounding at the time the condition was laid.

In spite of the success of the pastor and the church in extracting themselves from a very difficult situation, the stress was not productive for the building process or for the ministry of the church. It created an enormous burden on the clergy staff, since it required a considerable amount of the senior pastor's time and energy. It required money. It required an increase in secretarial workload because of the high volume of correspondence and paperwork related to the problem. And it caused no little amount of anxiety for the members of the congregation. While it did bring the people together and gave them a sense of accomplishment, most would have preferred not to have had the problem at all.

The senior pastor's subsequent advice to anyone planning to build is to examine every single condition thoroughly at the time of negotiation with the City Planning Staff. If there are conditions which the church cannot fulfill, then they need to appeal them at the beginning of the process, rather than becoming embroiled in a struggle like this.

These are just a few examples of the sorts of trouble a church can find

themselves in. While most churches did not have problems of this magnitude, many had minor troubles that were similar. No one can predict every sort of thing that can happen. But in most cases, the pastors felt that had they been even a little more thorough and cautious in the very early phases of planning they might have escaped some of their troubles. In the flush of excitement, churches tend to move ahead as quickly as they can, looking ever forward to the promise of a new worship place. But, regular pauses for a careful review of every aspect of the building process is highly recommended by those who found themselves with more trouble than they had bargained for.

## CHAPTER 10

### Conclusion

In spite of the "horror stories" and the caveats, every pastor with whom I spoke agreed that they would be willing to work on another building project. Many of them looked forward to another opportunity to use their newly acquired skills on behalf of some other church wishing to build a sanctuary. They pointed with pride to the buildings they had helped erect and spoke of the time involved as well worth the trouble and effort. Many enjoyed the intensity of a building program, its tangibility, and the enthusiasm it generated in the congregation.

Most churches had delightful building experiences and all were satisfied with the overall outcome. Many churches felt that the membership was stimulated by the building process and looked upon it as a particularly exciting time in the church's life and ministry. They were pleased with the growth that it had brought them and were excited by the new ministries they had developed in conjunction with their new building. Most of the churches with whom I had contact felt that they had built at the right time in the life of the church, that their growth required a new building and that they experience continued growth following their building.

What will the churches build tomorrow? For two hundred years American churches have reflected a unique interplay of art, theology and culture. They have served a changing church in a developing country. At their best, today's worship spaces will reflect those who inhabit them as the family of God with enough integrity, intimacy, authenticity and flexibility to serve the church of tomorrow. Tomorrow's worship spaces will encourage the kind of corporate intimacy that has been the driving force of Christianity from its inception. They will invite the worshipper to encounter a God who is both friend and mysterium tremendum. They will be



functional and honest. They will be flexible enough to accomodate the changing church seasons and the changing church times. The worship space that serves tomorrow well will, above all, have an authenticity that spans time. Those who build this space must have vision and purpose, one purpose--to shelter the family of God as it encounters God and celebrates the presence and promise of Christ.

## **Appendixes**

## APPENDIX A

## Discussion Strategies: Tools for the Pastor

<b>DISCUSSION STRATEGIES FOR THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS</b>	
<b>PART ONE: What is worship?</b>	
<b>A. Share in scripture readings.</b>	
1. The nature of the church:	
2. The nature of worship in the Old Testament:	
3. The nature of worship in the New Testament:	
<b>B. Share personal opinions.</b>	
1. Ask each individual what they imagine is the "most biblical" way to worship.	
2. Ask each person to share their favorite worship "traditions" and memories.	
a. on a regular Sunday service.	
b. on special occasions such as:	
i. Communion	
ii. Baptism	
iii. Easter	
iv. Christmas	
v. other special occasions.	
<b>C. Pastoral teaching time.</b>	
1. Biblical concepts of worship.	
a. Old Testament	
b. New Testament	
2. Church traditions.	
a. The early church (first few centuries)	
b. Middle of the millennium (cathedral age)	
c. American Methodism.	
d. Recent history of the particular area and particular congregation.	

(i.e. 1950's-60's suburban white? late '60's socially active? '50's segregated? ethnic traditions? small? large?)

Use this outline to lead your study committee through about one or two hours of learning and sharing time. The goal is for them to identify some of their personal and collective preconceptions about the nature of worship, based on their past experiences and for them to learn a little about what the church's varied traditions of worship. This is designed to open their minds about what currently happens in their worship, and what could happen in worship.

The first section involves three to six scripture references regarding worship. Begin the session with Bible reading for devotional purposes as well as educational purposes. It should help focus the group on the fact that we have a long history of Christian worship. Avoid implying that Biblical concepts of worship are "more holy" than contemporary ones, or giving the impression that our goal is to re-create the worship of the Bible, especially the early church.

During the second part of the session a member of the group may write responses on newsprint or chalkboard so all may see them. If the study group is large, subdivide into groups of five or six, then solicit answers from the sub-groups. These should be "first impression" kinds of answers. The answers to the questions should demonstrate several things. First, most groups will produce a wide variety of experiences. It's critical to affirm all of them. It will be interesting to point out how far they vary from the Biblical narratives. This is good for observations, but, again, is not an evaluative comparison. Finally, it will get out on the table the kinds of preconceptions people have about worship. All of these ideas and experiences can be affirmed, but it will be important for the discussion leader to point out that preconceived notions can hinder us if we let them.

The last part of the session can be spent with the pastor doing some lecture

oriented teaching about worship. The outline in C above is one suggestion. Most participants would benefit from a hand-out that contains the outline and some salient points. This will be the place where individuals can affirm their own ideas about worship as well as be challenged by other ideas. This is not the time to decide where a particular church is going with regard to worship, it is a time to paint a broad stroked picture of the variety and history of Christian worship.

<b>DISCUSSION STRATEGIES FOR THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS</b>	
<b>PART TWO: Where is worship going?</b>	
<b>A. Scripture Readings:</b>	
1. Nature of the church:	
2. Nature of Old Testament worship:	
3. Nature of New Testament worship:	
4. Nature of the future/eschatological church:	
<b>B. Personal sharing time.</b>	
1. How is worship now different from what you remember?	
2. How is '80's worship better/worse than what has gone before?	
3. If worship could be better, what things would change?	
4. What does "the church" do wrong in worship for today's men and women?	
5. What does "the church" do right?	
6. How should you <u>feel</u> before, during and after worship?	
<b>C. Pastoral teaching time.</b>	
1. Overview of why time is important to Christians.	
2. Overview of the Christian year.	
3. What does United Methodism believe about the Sacraments?	
a. Baptism? What is unique about us? What do we hold in common ecumenically?	
b. The Eucharist? What is unique about us? What do we hold in common ecumenically?	
4. Where United Methodist worship appears to be going, and what current movement is.	
<b>D. What worship will look like in 25 years in our church.</b>	
1. What year will it be?	
2. Who will attend? How many?	
3. What will happen in worship?	
4. Where will it occur?	
5. When will it be during the week? during the day?	

6. Why will people come? What will they think they are doing? What will they hope to get from/give to the event.
7. Who will take care of co-ordinating this worship event(s)?

This discussion strategy is designed to help the study group look forward in their ideas about worship and will take at least an hour and a half. They will examine what changes have occurred during their lifetime, be encouraged to make the connection between the changes that they have experienced with the overall historical changes of the church. They will especially be encouraged to recognize that worship is changing, possibly more rapidly and substantially than ever before. The purpose of this is to bring home the idea that the future will be different than the present and they are building for the future.

Again, the first part of the session should be used to read the Bible for focus and devotion, as well as for educational value. The leader may wish to use the same scriptures chosen in Part One for the first three selections. The fourth selection should be set apart to indicate that this discussion will envision what worship will be/can be in the future.

The next section, a personal sharing time, will serve to illustrate what kinds of changes have occurred and how rapidly. It should also demonstrate that some essential changes have been neglected to keep Christian worship contemporary with the needs of people. It will also help people realize that changes should and will happen and that flexibility is an essential trait for a congregation. During the discussion of B.6. it is necessary for the leader of the discussion to present the idea that worship may not necessarily be a felt experience and that importance of feelings and emotions is just one way of approaching worship. It would be good to introduce James White's other approach to worship as a work or a service. Discussion could center around what the

two together might look like. However, further work in this direction comes in section D.

The Pastoral teaching time, again, will consume the bulk of the study time and should acquaint the group with the importance of time in worship and give them an overview of the Christian year as the most enduring and long-lived "shape" of worship that most churches share. A Handbook of the Christian Year is a good resource for this. A hand-out of the Christian calendar would help folks follow along. There should also be time to remark on the variety of ideas about Baptism and the Eucharist, so that the group will begin to see these activities as something that ties them to all other Christians and to Christian history. Sharing about current trends in United Methodist worship will be a time for the group leader to express personal preferences, but should emphasize the possibilities open to congregations in addition to the direction taken by the General Boards and agencies who develop our worship resources.

The last section should be twenty to thirty minutes, as it is the time when the group will try to envision what worship will be for the congregation that may inhabit the building they are going to build. The primary goal for this section is to stress the need to build buildings that are flexible. In addition, it should help open the group to new ideas about worship and the wide variety of activities that a sanctuary houses and the wide variety of needs of its worshippers.



<b>DISCUSSION STRATEGIES FOR THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS</b>	
<b>PART THREE: Should we Build?</b>	
<b>A. What do we want worship to be?</b>	
1. How do we envision worship?	
2. What kind of space is a minimal requirement?	
3. What kind of space would be optimal?	
<b>B. What is faithful stewardship for us?</b>	
1. What is our current ministry?	
2. What are our ministry priorities?	
3. Does our current building co-ordinate with the priority worship has among us?	
4. Is this set of priorities what God is calling out from us?	
<b>C. What are some of our "bad" reasons for building?</b>	
1. Wrong at all.	
2. O.K. as a part of larger reasoning, but wrong as primary reasons for building.	
<b>D. Conclusions.</b>	
1. Yes, now.	
2. Yes, with more study.	
3. Yes, someday, but not right now.	
4. Not in the foreseeable future.	
5. Explore remodeling our current worship space.	

This is a suggested outline for a Feasibility Committee, but can also be used in the pastor's Study group. A Feasibility Committee must also explore the financial feasibility of building at this point in the life of the church. After exploring what worship has been and where it is going in the church at large, a congregation or study group can begin to articulate what they think worship can be for them. While they

won't actually vote to make changes, the discussion can be a kind of ground work for the changes that are happening in worship all over the country. They may wish to bring their worship more in line with ecumenical standards. They may wish to put more emphasis on liturgy, liturgical seasons and following the lectionary. They may wish to emphasize healing and reconciling ministries. They may find they want to make room for a more charismatic kind of worship, or that they want to emphasize the work of worship rather than its emotions.

When they can articulate where worship might go in the next twenty years in their congregation, they can begin to surface ideas about what kind of space would house this worship effectively. This would be a time when the group can be as imaginative as they like. It is a time when they can see how much change is possible in the next twenty years. They can see what parts of their worship are quite stable and need clear focus in the worship space and which parts change and need a building with maximum flexibility. One worship expert believes that the worship space should use lighting rather than furniture to define space. This kind of flexibility can be encouraged in this discussion.

Then the church can explore what would be a minimum kind of building to house their worship and what would be too much.

In order to clarify what is faithful stewardship with regard to a building project, the B section of the discussion might take a whole session by itself. It should be built around what a church has explored and decided in its all church planning and strategy sessions. A church that does not have a pattern of long range planning and strategy will have difficulty with the questions in this part of the discussion. This may also point out that the church is not, in fact, very clear about whether it needs to build, what to build and why. It would be helpful if the four areas of discussion in section B could be drawn up on a newprint and subsequently shared with the rest of

the congregation as some ideas about where the church is now. This will further stimulate church-wide discussion of the theological task underlying the building.

The remaining sections, C and D., are for a decision making committee rather than a study group, although section C. could stimulate very interesting discussion in a study group.

<b>Discussion Tool: Selecting an Architect</b>
<b>Scale: Criteria</b>
<b>How much "church building" experience:</b>
<b>How much religious background:</b>
<b>Reputation for being on budget:</b>
<b>Reputation for being on time:</b>
<b>How far through the process is involvement:</b>
<b>"Avant garde":</b>
<b>Fee structure:</b>
<b>Professional credentials:</b>
<b>Presentation:</b>

<b>Previous experience with pastor or church members:</b>
<b>Work with people/committee:</b>
<b>Volunteer labor relations:</b>
<b>Artistry and creativity:</b>
<b>Communication skills:</b>
<b>Exclusivity of contract:</b>

This tool can be used in two ways. In conjunction with Chapter 8, it can provide an outline for the Selection or Building Committee to discuss the criteria upon which they will base their selection of an architect. They can use the left-hand column to rank or give weight to each criteria. When they arrive at some kind of consensus, this can then be published as a guideline for each member of the committee, it may be submitted for the information of the Administrative Council or other group to whom they report, and it can even be shared with the architectural candidates, if the committee so chooses.

Then, during the selection process, each member of the Selection Committee can have the group criteria sheet before them. They can also have a supply of blank copies to use to take notes during the presentations and interviews of the various candidates. While this is not a balloting process, or a case where one adds up the numbers to see who "wins," it can be a way for the individuals in a committee and the

committee as a whole to keep the importance of various criteria before them, rather than their personal attachment to a particular candidate.

## APPENDIX B

### Suggested Schedule for the Process

1. The Pastor and/or the Administrative Council (or other executive body) feels that the sentiment of the congregation to build a new sanctuary is strong enough to warrant study.
2. Pastor leads six to eight week study group with the understanding that from attendees of this class will be drawn the Building Committee and other task forces that may be needed.
3. Feasibility Committee (or Building Committee) makes a six to eight week study about the financial and physical practicality of building and makes a recommendation to the Administrative Council.
4. A Building Fund drive should be conducted at this period, if not before.
5. Selection Committee (or Building Committee) establishes criteria for architectural candidates and for making a selection, receives presentations, interviews, visits churches, then reports and recommends to Administrative Council.
6. Building Committee approves plans and recommends them for Charge/Church Conference approval.
7. If the first fund drive is completed (i.e. three years have passed) another Building Fund drive is appropriate.
8. Complete financial package is worked out, approved by District Committee on Building and Location or other regional agency, the District Superintendent or regional officer, and presented to the Charge/Church Conference for approval.
9. Building Committee recommends to hire contractor (or other project manager)

**and building proceeds through occupancy.**



**APPENDIX C**  
**Sample Sanctuary Building Questionnaire**  
**(Used for Interviews of Pastors)**

**Name:**

**Years as Pastor:**

**Church where you conducted a building program:**

**Year:**

**Number of members:**

**Average Worship Attendance:**

**Yearly budget (approx.):**

**Nature of building:**

**What kind of plant did you have when you started building:**

**Cost of Building:**

\*\*\*\*\*

**How long did the entire process take:**

**Feasibility study:**

**Finance campaigns:**

**Actual construction:**

**Bureaucratic follow-up:**

**During which parts of the process were you the pastor of this church?:**

**What were the advantage/disadvantages of coming in/leaving off where you did?**

**Describe areas for which you assumed responsibility:**

**How did the building process affect your other pastoral duties? Please be specific, use reverse if necessary.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Do you think your congregation had unrealistic expectations for results from the building? What were they?**

**Do you think your people had unrealistic expectations for the building process? What were they?**

**During the finance campaign, planning stages and building stages, what happened to the following areas of your regular programming:**

**Education:**

**Current budget giving:**

**Worship attendance:**

**Missions and outreach:**

**Evangelism:**

**Youth and children's ministries:**

**Parish fellowship and unity:**

**New programming:**

**What happened to the above categories within the first year following completion of the new building?**

\*\*\*\*\*

**In general, how was the morale of the congregation? Did it swing up or down at certain points of the whole process?**

\*\*\*\*\*

**How did you finance your building?**

**What methods did you use? Did you find them satisfactory? Why/why not?**

\*\*\*\*\*  
**How did you choose an architect?**

**What were the characteristics of working with your architect that you appreciated?**

**Which characteristic gave you trouble?**

\*\*\*\*\*  
**How did things work with the city/county?**

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Did you feel that you provided adequate pastoral leadership for the building process?**

**Did you feel that you provided adequate pastoral leadership for the ongoing ministry of the church?**

**What changes did you make in your schedule/priorities?**

**What changes were made in the jobs of the other ministerial staff?**

**What changes were made in the jobs of other lay employees and/or volunteers?**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Would you do this again?**

**What advice would you give other clergy about to embark on this endeavor?**

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